

TIMELINE OF GOVERNMENTAL ATTACKS AGAINST HUNGARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

17 NOVEMBER 2017

Since the elections in 2010, the current governing party has systematically **undermined the rule of law** in Hungary, seriously **disrupting the system of checks and balances**. The adoption of the new constitution without the consent of the opposition and the widely criticized media regulation were followed by legislative steps weakening independent institutions (e.g. the Constitutional Court, the judiciary and the Ombudsman system) and violating human rights (e.g. the right to fair trial) in mass numbers. These legislative steps were accompanied by the early removal of leaders of independent institutions and the “court-packing” of the Constitutional Court. As shown by the international criticism e.g. on behalf of the European Union and the Council of Europe, several rules adopted by the governing majority were not in compliance with democratic values and international standards. The **series of governmental attacks against Hungarian NGOs**, which organisations operate by their nature as checks and critics of the state power and fight for reinforcing the rule of law and ensuring the protection of human rights, is another step in the process aimed at **establishing an “illiberal state”**.

These attacks included **condemning public statements by high-ranking state officials** (including the Prime Minister) alleging that some NGOs are closely linked to political parties and/or serve “foreign interests”; an **illegitimate state audit** into the use of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund; **criminal procedures** launched against members of the consortium of NGOs distributing the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund; a **police raid** of their offices (later found unlawful by the investigation judge); and the **suspension of their tax numbers**. Even though the official proceedings launched as part of the governmental attacks against the Hungarian consortium of NGOs distributing the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund and organisations supported by the NGO Fund ceased or were terminated (without any criminal charges brought) by the beginning of 2016, **critical and threatening statements** from the government and the governing parties against human rights and watchdog NGOs continued. In fact, these got even stronger in 2017, now primarily targeting NGOs supported by the Open Society Foundations. Finally, in April 2017, governing party MPs submitted the **Bill on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds** (the “Lex NGO”) to the Hungarian Parliament, setting out that organisations receiving foreign funds over a yearly threshold of 7.2 million HUF (app. 23,000 EUR) will have to register at court and will have to label themselves as organisations receiving foreign funds on their website and in all their publications, while including sanctions in case of non-compliance. In spite of domestic objections and severe concerns voiced by several international stakeholders, the Bill was adopted by the Parliament and entered into force in June 2017.

COLOUR CODE:

	Statements and reactions in relation to the operation of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund
	Legal procedures in relation to the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund
	Statements, non-legal steps and reactions in relation to “foreign funded” NGOs, supported by the Open Society Foundations, and NGOs defending the rights of asylum-seekers
	Legislative steps and legal developments related to the Lex NGO

<p>14-15 August 2013</p> <p>NGOs “serving foreign interests” are listed by government-friendly newspapers</p>	<p>On 14-15 August 2013, both the printed and online versions of the government-friendly Hungarian newspaper <i>Heti Válasz</i> stated that the “Budapest-born American speculator” George (György) Soros spent last year almost half a billion forints on “strengthening the ‘civil’ opposition”, or “the ‘civil’ left wing”. The article listed 11 NGOs – including leading human rights and watchdog NGOs – which received grants from e.g. the Open Society Foundations, thus, in the newspaper’s view, are “kept” by George Soros, who exerts political influence through them. The article also stated that the “Soros-crew” had an “outstanding role” also in distributing grants in the framework of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund, stating that the Ökotárs Foundation (which leads the Hungarian consortium distributing the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund) is also dependent on Soros, and that one-third of the whole sum distributed ended up at “Soros-compatible” organisations. The article also listed 13 NGOs which received grants from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund, again, including leading human rights and watchdog organisations.¹ The accusations were echoed by the government-friendly newspaper <i>Magyar Nemzet</i>.</p> <p>→ In its reply dated 16 October 2013 the ambassador of Norway firmly declined the above allegations, recalling that the Ökotárs Foundation was chosen to operate the NGO Fund in Hungary in an open tendering process.²</p> <p>→ Allegations were also firmly declined by the Ökotárs Foundation, which reminded that the priorities of the NGO programme under the EEA/Norway Grants are the same in all of the countries covered, and that the newspaper articles inappropriately failed to differentiate between social engagement (supported by the NGO Fund) and party political activities.³</p>
<p>17 August 2013</p> <p>The governing party echoes newspaper’s allegations</p>	<p>At a press conference on 17 August 2013 the spokesperson of the governing party Fidesz, Péter Hoppál, stated the following: “From an investigative report we learnt that a circle of American speculators paid about half a billion forints to show its gratitude to pseudo-civil organisations who were willing to regularly denounce Fidesz and the Hungarian government, particularly abroad and in front of forums abroad. (...) These organisations kept for millions of dollars, what these organisations do, all they have to do in exchange of the American money, is to attack the Hungarian government, attack Fidesz, and attack the Prime Minister of Hungary in all possible forums.” When a journalist asked the spokesperson to name the organisations he has in mind, the spokesperson named leading human rights and watchdog NGOs.⁴</p> <p>→ The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, as one of the NGOs named, asked the spokesperson for an apology, yet he did not respond. Eventually the NGO decided to go to court, and in July 2014, the first instance court found that the spokesperson and Fidesz have violated the right of the organisation for good reputation, arguing that these statements – which the respondents did not even try to support with evidence in court – may cause damage to the public image of the organisation. The court obliged Mr. Hoppál and the Fidesz to publish an apology in two daily newspapers and on the party’s website.⁵ The respondents appealed against the decision.</p>

¹ For the online version, see: <http://valasz.hu/itthon/soros-felmilliardot-adott-orban-ellenfeleinek-67174>.

² See: <http://valasz.hu/publi/soros-nyiss-nekem-tert-visszhang-69399>.

³ See: <http://norvegcivilalap.hu/hu/node/4210>.

⁴ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2014/07/07/megiarta_hoppal_peter_amikor_lealcivilezte_a_helsinki_bizottsagot/.

⁵ See: <http://helsinki.hu/a-fidesz-es-szovivoje-pert-veszített-a-helsinki-bizottsaggal-szemben>.

<p><i>8 April 2014</i></p> <p>Prime Minister's Office claims political influence with regard to the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund</p>	<p>On 8 April 2014 it was reported by the media that János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister's Office wrote a letter to the Norwegian government, claiming that the money from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund is distributed by an organisation closely linked to the opposition party Politics Can Be Different. Furthermore, an Undersecretary of State from the Prime Minister's Office, Nándor Csepregy, stated that if Norway will not be a partner in solving the issue that may be interpreted in a way that Norway interferes with the internal affairs of Hungary.⁶</p> <p>→ In its response dated 24 April 2014, the Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs Vidar Helgesen reminded that the "process of selecting the fund operator for the NGO programme in Hungary has followed the regulation and procedures outlined in the agreement of the grants. The selection was done through an open tendering process where the selection criteria were publicly available and transparent. The current operator met all the specified criteria (...)." The Minister also stated the following: "I wish to underline that the Government of Norway has not been engaged in supporting, financially or otherwise, any party political activities in Hungary. These are rather surprising accusations, and I cannot see that they are valid."⁷</p> <p>→ The Ökotárs Foundation also issued a statement, underlining that it had never supported the Politics Can Be Different, any other political parties or any organisations closely linked to political parties in any form; and that the list of their grants is public.⁸</p>
<p><i>11 April 2014</i></p> <p>Turns out that a background institution of the government lost the tender for operating the NGO Fund</p>	<p>On 11 April 2014 news sources reported that the Századvég Foundation also participated in the open tendering process for the position of fund operator with regard to the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund, but since it was apparently not impartial, it was not selected.⁹ (The Századvég-group is the most important background institution of the government, preparing studies, polls and surveys. The activities of the organisation are mostly financed by the state:¹⁰ e.g. in the first half of 2012 the Századvég received almost a billion HUF for preparing studies and analysis – which should have been prepared by the ministries themselves –, meaning that they received approx. 470,000 HUF per page.¹¹)</p>
<p><i>30 April 2014</i></p> <p>Senior government official calls NGO Fund operators "party-dependent, cheating nobodies"</p>	<p>Undersecretary of State Nándor Csepregy called the foundations acting as the operator consortium of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund "party-dependent, cheating nobodies", and indicated that there are plans to entrust the state with operating the NGO Fund.¹²</p> <p>→ As a reaction, on 7 May 2014 the consortium led by the Ökotárs Foundation issued an open letter, addressed to János Lázár, strongly asking him to call upon his deputy to withdraw his statements that breached the reputation of the organisations. The consortium underlined that they have a number of programs beyond operating the NGO Fund, and cited concrete examples of cooperation with actors of the government.¹³</p>

⁶ See e.g.: <http://mno.hu/belfold/lazar-levelben-tiltakozik-a-kulfoldi-beavatkozas-ellen-1220352>.

⁷ For the response in English, see: http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/brev/svar_lazar.pdf.

⁸ See: <http://norvegcivilalap.hu/hu/node/8050>.

⁹ See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2014/04/11/a-szazadveg-akarta-a-norveg-penzeket/>.

¹⁰ See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2013/04/04/otmilliardra-nott-a-szazadveg-megbizasa/>.

¹¹ See: <http://ekint.org/ekint/ekint.news.page?nodeid=559>.

¹² See: http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20140430_Csepregyh_szelhamos_gittegyletek_kezelik/.

¹³ For the open letter in English, see: <http://norvegcivilalap.hu/en/node/8239>.

<p>6 May 2014</p> <p>Government requests that the NGO Fund is “suspended”</p>	<p>In a letter dated 6 May 2014, János Lázár asked the Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs in vain that the NGO programme in Hungary is “suspended” until the issue at stake is settled “to the satisfaction of both parties“, claiming that the independence and the operation of the Ökotárs-led consortium was questionable. The letter also indicated that the government wishes to enter into negotiations as to the new fund operator (even though Hungary is not a party to the agreement under which the NGO Fund operates).¹⁴</p>
<p>21 May 2014</p> <p>State audit is launched against NGOs receiving support from the NGO Fund</p>	<p>On 21 May 2014 it was announced by the Prime Minister’s Office that the government requests the Government Control Office (GCO) – a state agency vested with the task of auditing state money – to launch a unilateral audit into how the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund is managed, in order to see whether the government’s suspicion that the fund’s money is used to support political organisations indirectly, or NGOs closely linked to them, may be substantiated.¹⁵</p> <p>→ On 28 May 2014 the secretariat of the EEA/Norway Grants donor states, the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO), has made clear its position in an official letter addressed to János Lázár that the conduct of the proposed audit “cannot be accepted”, since according to the respective agreements the implementation of the NGO Fund, including its regular audit, is the responsibility of the donor states. It was underlined that since the NGO Fund does not receive any funding from Hungarian state budget, no funds from Hungarian state budget are managed by the Ökotárs Foundation in this context. It was also submitted that an audit by the donors has already been planned and will be carried out during the autumn, and the results of this audit will certainly be made available to the Hungarian authorities. Furthermore, the Norwegian government rejected again all allegations of supporting, financially or otherwise, any party political activity in Hungary.¹⁶</p>
<p>28 May – 1 June 2014</p> <p>Governmental lists on “potentially problematic” NGO projects and “left wing evaluators” come to light</p>	<p>After János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister’s Office had stated in an interview¹⁷ on 28 May 2014 that one of the ministries has been preparing materials on the potentially problematic NGO projects since 2011, an online news portal acquired the respective list from the Prime Minister’s Office, which turned out to contain exactly the same human rights and watchdog NGOs as the <i>Heti Válasz</i> article from August 2013 referred to above.¹⁸ (For the list of the NGOs, see the end of the sheet.)</p> <p>Furthermore, even though the name of the evaluators for the NGO Fund is not public in order to exclude lobbying, it turned out that the Prime Minister’s Office also listed evaluators with “left wing political ties”, mainly citing politically relevant activities preceding their job as an evaluator. At the same time, an online news portal stated that there are also evaluators who, following the same logic, could have been listed as having ties to the Fidesz. The governmental list also contained “incompatible” evaluators, to which the Ökotárs responded that evaluators who would be incompatible with regard to an application do not participate in its evaluation.¹⁹</p>

¹⁴ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2014/05/09/lazar_felfuggesztene_a_norveg_civil_alap_tamogatasait/.

¹⁵ See e.g.: http://index.hu/gazdasag/2014/05/21/rakuldik_a_kehit_a_norveg_alapra/.

¹⁶ For the press release in English, see: <http://www.norvegia.hu/Norsk/EEA-and-Norway-Grants1/EEA-and-Norway-Grants/Proposed-investigation-of-the-NGO-Fund-by-the-Government-Control-Office/#.VBnPWVekPgH>.

¹⁷ See e.g.: <http://444.hu/2014/05/28/lazar-janos-norveg-civil-alap/>.

¹⁸ See: <http://444.hu/2014/05/30/itt-a-kormany-listaja-a-szervezetekrol-akik-miatt-nekimentek-a-norveg-alapnak/>.

¹⁹ See e.g.: <http://444.hu/2014/05/31/titkos-nevsort-adott-ki-a-kormany-hogy-megmondja-kivel-van-baja/>, http://index.hu/belfold/2014/06/01/az_nfu_adta_ki_a_norveg_alap_titkos_nevsorat/.

2 June 2014
**State auditors
request
documents from
NGO Fund
operators**

On 2 June 2014, the GCO made an on-site audit at three members of the consortium responsible for the operation of the EEA/Norwegian NGO Fund (Autonómia Foundation, Foundation for the Development of Democratic Rights – DemNet, and Ökotárs Foundation), and demanded that certain documents be handed over. Even though the foundations maintained the view that the GCO had no right to investigate, they decided to turn over some of the documents. However, the head of the Ökotárs stated that they would not like to turn over documents which contain sensitive personal data (such as the names of clients of human rights NGOs), and they had asked that their standpoint as to the illegitimate nature of the audit is recorded.²⁰ Furthermore, the Ökotárs submitted a formal letter to the GCO, inquiring about the legal basis of the audit.²¹

→ In order to express the Norwegian authorities' concern about Hungary's actions, the Hungarian Ambassador to Norway was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 4 June 2014, and representatives from the Norwegian Embassy in Budapest paid a visit to the Hungarian authorities on 5 June 2014. The Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs stated that he is "deeply concerned about the actions of the Hungarian authorities in relation to civil society and their attempts to limit freedom of expression" and that the Hungarian authorities' audit does not comply with the agreements that have been entered into. It was emphasized again that a number of NGO funds were scheduled to be audited in the autumn of 2014 by the donor countries, including the fund in Hungary, and the results of these audits will be made available to the public. The Minister stated that if the Hungarian authorities would like to request access to documents related to the administration of the NGO Fund, they are to contact the FMO in Brussels.²²

→ On 3 June 2014, the Director of the FMO sent a letter to János Lázár, expressing her strong objection once again with regard to the GCO's intervention. The director also stated that Ökotárs shall maintain professional secrecy during the implementation of the programme according to its agreement with the FMO, and, therefore, the GCO shall address any further request, question or inquiry directly to the FMO.²³

→ After a high-level meeting on 12 June 2014 between the states involved, it was stated again by Norway that responsibility for the NGO programme and any potential audits lies with the donor states, and that the Hungarian government's actions "undermine the independence of civil society from the authorities". It was expressed that halting the audit is one of the preconditions for lifting the earlier suspension of the EEA and Norway Grants.²⁴ (Payments to Hungary under the EEA and Norway Grants scheme were suspended as of 9 May 2014, because the Hungarian Government has moved the implementation and

²⁰ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2014/06/02/megiscsak_rajta_utott_a_kehi_a_norveg_alapon/, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/02/us-hungary-norway-funding-ngo-idUSKBN0ED1QW20140602?feedType=RSS&irpc=932> (in English).

²¹ See e.g.: <http://nol.hu/belfold/okotars-nincs-jogalapja-a-kehi-vizsgalatnak-1466411>. For the letter of the Ökotárs, see: https://norvegcivilalap.hu/sites/default/files/dokumentumok/okotars_level_kehi.pdf.

²² For the press release in English, see: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/press/news/2014/civil-society-hungary.html?id=762213>.

²³ For the letter in English, see: https://norvegcivilalap.hu/sites/default/files/dokumentumok/4_1_sz_levelre_eslo_valasz_az_fmotel_2014_06_03.pdf.

²⁴ For the press release in English, see: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/sub/europaportalen/aktuelt/nyheter/2014/Still-no-agreement-with-Hungary.html?id=763125>.

	<p>monitoring of the Grants scheme out of the central government administration, which was seen by the donor states as a breach of the agreements that have been entered into.²⁵⁾</p> <p>→ Since the Hungarian government failed to address the issue of the state audit of NGOs in its follow-up letter dated 17 June 2014, the FMO emphasized once again in a response dated 25 June 2014 that the cancellation of the audit against the NGO Fund operator is also a precondition of further dialogue on lifting the suspension.²⁶⁾</p>
<p>16 June 2014</p> <p>Request for further documents is rejected by fund operator</p>	<p>Instead of responding to the inquiry of the Ökotárs as to the legal basis of its audit, the GCO requested another set of documents from the Ökotárs in a letter dated 16 June 2014, giving the NGO a three-day deadline, and disregarding the above-mentioned letter of the Director of the FMO, which stated that any further requests shall be addressed to the FMO. The FMO was on the opinion that some of the newly requested information could not be shared with the GCO since that would possibly harm basic civil rights, and asked the Ökotárs to reject the GCO's request,²⁷⁾ which the Ökotárs did.</p>
<p>25-27 June 2014</p> <p>Newspaper falsely states that EY investigation supports the state's accusation; government refers to initiating a criminal procedure</p>	<p>On 25-26 June 2014 both the printed and the online versions of the government-friendly newspaper <i>Heti Válasz</i> claimed that a draft audit report prepared by Ernst & Young supported the concerns of János Lázár with respect to the Ökotárs, with regard to the period between 2008 and 2010.²⁸⁾ Referring to the report, Undersecretary Csepreghy stated that it was possible that the Ökotárs committed fraud.²⁹⁾ On 27 June 2014 it was announced that the government requested the audit report from the EY, and if that will support the allegations of the press, than the government will initiate a criminal procedure even before the audit of the GCO is over.³⁰⁾ (Subsequently it turned out that the EY's report was handed over to the GCO by the Ökotárs itself earlier on.³¹⁾</p> <p>→ On 1 July 2014 the independent investigative news portal atlatszo.hu published the EY's draft report in its entirety, concluding that in fact the audit report considered the implementation of the program adequate as a whole, revealed no systemic deficiencies, and although it pointed out risks and problems, nothing to the extent indicated by the governmental accusations, and certainly nothing which could constitute a criminal offence.³²⁾</p>
<p>June 2014</p> <p>State auditors request documents from NGOs supported by the NGO Fund</p>	<p>In the course of June 2014, altogether 58 NGOs supported by the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund received a letter of query from the GCO to submit documents related to their projects financed by NGO Fund. The request covered practically entire project documentations in addition to organisational documents, and the deadline provided was very tight: they had to comply with the request approximately within a week.³³⁾ Some of the NGOs submitted an inquiry to the GCO as to the legal basis for the investigation, but received a</p>

²⁵⁾ For the press release in English, see: http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/press/news/2014/hungary_suspension.html?id=758873.

²⁶⁾ For the letter in English, see: <http://norvegcivilalap.hu/en/node/8552>.

²⁷⁾ For the letter of the Financial Mechanism Office in English, see:

https://norvegcivilalap.hu/sites/default/files/dokumentumok/7_1_sz_levelre_masodik_valasz_az_fmotel_2014_06_17.pdf.

²⁸⁾ See: <http://valasz.hu/itthon/fordulat-norvegugyben-neves-vilagceg-igazolja-lazar-janost-101180>.

²⁹⁾ See e.g.: <http://www.hir24.hu/belfold/2014/06/27/sikkasztással-vadolja-a-kormany-az-okotars-alapitvanyt/>.

³⁰⁾ See e.g.: <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20140627-mar-a-kehi-vizsgalat-elott-feljelentest-tehet-a-kormany-a-norveg-alap-penzei-miatt.html>.

³¹⁾ See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2014/06/27/norvegok-a-leleplezo-iratokban-nem-az-van-amit-a-kormany-mond/>.

³²⁾ See e.g.: <http://atlatszo.hu/2014/07/01/itt-az-ernst-young-jelentese-a-norveg-civil-alap-atvilagitasarol/>.

³³⁾ See e.g.: http://tv2.hu/musoraink/tenyek/152884_adatokat_kernek_a-norveg-penzekrol.html.

	<p>sample letter which in their view did not succeed in substantiating the GCO's right to investigate them.³⁴</p> <p>→ Four of the NGOs concerned – the Asimov Foundation (operating the investigative news portal atlatszo.hu), the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Szivárvány Misszó Foundation (organizer of the Budapest Pride), and the Krétakör Foundation – decided to make the project documentation available on their websites instead of submitting it to the GCO, expressing their standpoint that the audit had no legal basis.³⁵ At the same time, e.g. Transparency International Hungary decided to comply with the GCO's request, but upheld the view as to the questionable legal basis of the audit.³⁶ (It has to be added that not complying was not without risk, since the GCO can initiate the suspension of the tax number of any entities refusing to cooperate with it, which practically renders NGOs' life impossible.)</p> <p>→ The GCO gave another, also tight deadline for the concerned NGOs in July 2014 to submit documents they failed to submit earlier, and stated that a high fine (500,000 HUF) will be imposed on them if they do not comply.³⁷ However, the four NGOs who refused to cooperate earlier upheld their stance.³⁸</p> <p>→ Upon the complaints of NGOs (including the Transparency International Hungary) the Ombudsperson of Hungary concluded in a letter sent to János Lázár on 23 July 2014 that the interpretation of Norway shall be also taken into account with regard to the audit of the funds. However, the Ombudsperson did not take any further action.³⁹</p>
<p><i>21 July 2014</i></p> <p>State auditors demand further documents from NGO Fund operators</p>	<p>On 21 July 2014, the GCO sent another request for documents to the Ökotárs Foundation, now threatening to impose sanctions (fines and/or the suspension of the organisation's tax number) in case of non-cooperation. The new documents requested not only concerned the Ökotárs, but also the NGOs supported from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund.</p> <p>→ On 24 July 2014, the Ökotárs issued a statement, listing the documents they submitted to the GCO previously in the spirit of cooperation (questioning the audit's legality though) and which are the ones they do not agree to hand over (e.g. data of non-supported applicants and documents containing sensitive personal data). The statement continued by saying that in case of the latter documents the Ökotárs questions "why they would be needed to achieve the stated goal of the investigation (...), to establish whether the use of the funds was appropriate".⁴⁰</p>
<p><i>26 July 2014</i></p> <p>PM refers to</p>	<p>In his speech delivered on 26 July 2014, in which he declared that he and his government builds an "illiberal state", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that their efforts in that regard</p>

³⁴ See e.g.:

http://www.transparency.hu/TI_turns_to_the_Ombudsman_regarding_recent_government_audit?bind_info=index&bind_id=0 (in English).

³⁵ See: <http://blog.atlatszo.hu/2014/06/a-kehi-es-az-atlatszo-esete/>, <http://budapestpride.hu/hirek/kehi-valasz-2> and <http://budapestpride.hu/hirek/budapest-pride-a-kozossseg-es-a-nyilvanossag-fele-szamolunk-el>, <http://tasz.hu/en/about-us/hclu-accounts-public-not-gco> (in English).

³⁶ See: http://www.transparency.hu/TI_turns_to_the_Ombudsman_regarding_recent_government_audit?bind_info=index&bind_id=0 (in English).

³⁷ See e.g.: <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20140715-norveg-ugy-ultimatum-a-kehitel-jon-az-ujabb-csapas>.

³⁸ See e.g.: <http://vs.hu/birsag-ellenere-sem-hatralnak-az-ellenallo-norveg-civilek-0717>.

³⁹ See: http://www.transparency.hu/uploads/docs/ombudsman_levele_miniszterelnoksegnek.pdf.

⁴⁰ For the statement and the list of documents in English, see: <http://norvegcivilalap.hu/en/node/8578>.

<p>NGOs as “paid political activists” helping foreign interests</p>	<p>are obstructed by civil society organisations, and referred to civil society members as “paid political activists who are trying to help foreign interests”.⁴¹</p>
<p><i>August 2014</i> First criminal procedure is launched against the operator of the NGO Fund</p>	<p>In the beginning of August 2014 it was reported that the police launched an investigation against the Ökotárs on the suspicion of fraud. However, this procedure was not initiated by the government, but by a member of the Fidesz, probably for personal reasons.⁴² Later on, the underlying criminal offence was altered to “fraudulent misuse of funds” or, in other words, embezzlement.⁴³</p>
<p><i>3 September 2014</i> Criminal procedure is initiated against an NGO by the GCO</p>	<p>On 3 September it was announced that the GCO initiated a criminal procedure on the suspicion of “unlicensed financial activities” against an unidentified NGO who gave loans to other NGOs for years.⁴⁴ The Ökotárs soon replied that it is not a secret that, on an ad hoc basis, upon individual requests, the Ökotárs has given loans to NGOs from its own capital, mainly to help with the financing of EU-projects, but did not derive any benefit from that. The Ökotárs emphasized that this activity was included in its public reports, and that it is not related to their activities concerning the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund.⁴⁵</p>
<p><i>4 September 2014</i> DPA obliges fund operator to disclose list of non-supported applications</p>	<p>After the Ökotárs refused to hand over a government-friendly television channel the list of non-supported applicants and the reasoning as to why they were not supported, claiming e.g. that only the FMO would be allowed to submit the data, the Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information reached a decision in the beginning of September, obliging the Ökotárs to fulfil the television channel’s request.⁴⁶</p>
<p><i>8 September 2014</i> Police raid on NGO Fund operators; documents concerning “blacklisted” NGOs are seized</p>	<p>In the framework of the investigations above – in which defendants are not identified, thus potential defendants are not protected from self-incrimination –, on 8 September 2014 the offices of the Ökotárs and the DemNet were raided by the police, who showed up in disproportionately high numbers (reportedly, 43 police officers participated in the raid). Staff members were not allowed to use their phones, and the police also conducted searches in the homes of certain staff members and at the foundation’s accountant. The head of Ökotárs was escorted home by the police in order to fetch her laptop.⁴⁷ The police seized computers, documents, etc., and both the opinion of the representatives of the Ökotárs and the DemNet</p>

⁴¹ See e.g.: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-28/orban-says-he-seeks-to-end-liberal-democracy-in-hungary.html> (in English), <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/hirek/a-munkaalapu-allam-korszaka-kovetkezik>.

⁴² See e.g.: <http://vs.hu/mar-nyomoznak-sikkasztas-miatt-norveg-civilek-ugyeben-0805>, http://index.hu/belfold/2014/08/23/nyomoz_a_rendorseg_a_norveg_alapok_ugyeben/, <http://vs.hu/fideszes-emailrol-jelentettek-fel-norveg-alapot-0806>.

⁴³ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2014/08/23/nyomoz_a_rendorseg_a_norveg_alapok_ugyeben/.

⁴⁴ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20140903_Feljelentett_a_Kehi_egy_szervezetet_a_nor

⁴⁵ See: <http://norvegcivilalap.hu/hu/node/8649>.

⁴⁶ See e.g.: http://mno.hu/magyar_nemzet_belfoldi_hirei/torvenyt-sertett-az-okotars-1245895.

⁴⁷ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2014/09/08/keszenletisek_akcioznak_az_okotarsnal/

	<p>and the police's list of the seized materials show that the police were mainly interested in the 13 NGOs "blacklisted" by the Prime Minister's Office earlier on⁴⁸ – giving rise to suspicions that the criminal procedure was used to access documents the GCO could not.⁴⁹</p> <p>→ On 9 September 2014, the Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs stated that the police raid was "completely unacceptable" and made it clear that the Hungarian authorities "have no intention of fulfilling their obligations under the agreements Hungary has entered into on the management of the EEA and Norway Grants".⁵⁰ Also on 9 September, the ambassador of Norway stated in an interview on a Hungarian television channel that in their view the GCO's audit has no legal basis, and that they have been wholly satisfied with the work of the Ökotárs.⁵¹</p>
<p>11 September 2014</p> <p>The scope of the state audit is extended</p>	<p>On 11 September 2014 it was announced that the scope of the GCO's audit had been extended to funds received by the Ökotárs in the framework of the Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Programme, and also to funds received from other state budget sources.⁵²</p>
<p>15 September 2014</p> <p>PM at Parliament's opening session: NGOs apply double standards</p>	<p>In a speech delivered at the opening of the autumn session of the Parliament on 15 September 2014 Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stated the following: "We don't want anything more than to see clearly, we want to have clean water in the glass, because we are bothered by insincerity and lies, and we don't like it when someone who talks about freedom is a mercenary, or who talks about independence is a kept person. Declares himself a civilian but is in fact a paid political activist. Talks about respect for the law but when it comes to his own financial affairs, calls for exceptional procedures, saying that's not Hungarian money. Hungarian voters don't like this, so the government does well when it says, laws apply to everybody, to political parties, civil society organisations, and also to citizens who don't organise themselves at all."</p>
<p>18-24 September 2014</p> <p>The tax number of fund operators is suspended</p>	<p>On 18 September 2014, the tax number of the consortium's fourth member, the Kárpátok Foundation was suspended, and the GCO stated that the tax number of the remaining three consortium members will also be suspended, on the basis that the foundations are responsible for distributing public money but they are "secretive" and they do not want to disclose certain documents. On 22-24 September 2014 the remaining three consortium members (Ökotárs, DemNet and Autonómia Foundation) were also notified that their tax numbers had been suspended.⁵³</p> <p>→ Members of the consortium distributing the EEA/Norway Grants NGO requested a judicial review of the decision suspending their tax numbers.</p>
<p>23-24 September 2014</p>	<p>In his remarks delivered at the Clinton Global Initiative on 23 September 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama referred to Hungary as one of the countries where NGOs are</p>

⁴⁸ See: <http://atlatszo.hu/2014/09/08/a-pizskos-tizenharomra-vadaszott-a-rendorseg-az-okotarsnal-es-a-demnetnel/>.

⁴⁹ See: <http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/politikai-terbe-emelt-koncepcios-vizsgalat-91621>.

⁵⁰ For the press release in English, see: http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/press/news/2014/raid_eea.html?id=767076.

⁵¹ See e.g.: <http://444.hu/2014/09/10/norveg-nagykovet-nem-magyar-hanem-norveg-kozpenzrol-van-szo/>.

⁵² See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20140911_Kiterjesztettek_a_Kehivizsgalatot_az_Oko/.

⁵³ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20140923_Felfuggesztettek_az_Okotars_es_a_Demnet_a/,
http://index.hu/belfold/2014/09/24/az_autonomia_alapitvany_adoszamat_is_felfuggesztettek/.

<p>U.S. President's statement on Hungary intimidating NGOs is labelled as being without any factual basis by ministry</p>	<p>attacked, saying the following: "From Hungary to Egypt, endless regulations and overt intimidation increasingly target civil society."⁵⁴</p> <p>→ On the next day, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a short statement, saying that the above remarks of the U.S. President had "no factual basis".⁵⁵</p> <p>→ On 1 October 2014, a Secretary of State of the Prime Minister's Office, László L. Simon, stated to the press that the critics of Hungary from the U.S. and Western Europe "fear for a quite well-operating network" when they accuse the Hungarian government with targeting civil society, "a network the financing of which is thought out very well, and there are political-ideological considerations behind it". He also stated that the reason behind the U.S. President's words was that "the influential political circles behind the President now sense that the organisations [in Hungary] which they support and which are able to carry out powerful political activity suffer harm because of the investigations launched against them". The Secretary of State strived to support this statement with the fact that the NGOs supported from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund and those supported by donors from the U.S. (such as the former CEE Trust) overlap.⁵⁶</p>
<p><i>22 October 2014</i></p> <p>GCO publishes its audit report, rejected by Norway</p>	<p>On 22 October 2014, the GCO published its audit report,⁵⁷ containing generalized and highly questionable critical conclusions. The GCO claimed irregularities with regard to the implementation of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund without identifying the rules breached, and that criminal offences had been committed, but provided no explanation in that regard either. It was also announced that the GCO will launch a criminal procedure based on the report.⁵⁸</p> <p>→ On 23 October 2014, the director of the Ökotárs reacted to the GCO's audit report by stating: "It is really difficult to react to the generalized and unfounded charges articulated in KEHI's report. If they found irregularities, then they should have described exactly who committed these and how much money we are talking about here."⁵⁹</p> <p>→ On 28 October 2014, Norway issued a statement regarding the matter, containing the following: "The KEHI-audit [i.e. the GCO-audit] of the NGO-fund is in breach with the agreements governing the EEA-grants. No funds from the Hungarian state budget are at stake and the donors will not accept discussions based on this report. The donors will base their evaluation of the NGO-fund on an independent audit. We find the actions taken by the Hungarian government against the fund operator of the NGO-fund, Ökotárs to show a troubling lack of respect for the independence of civil society. As such, we believe the Hungarian government is challenging basic democratic values underpinning European co-operation. (...) A solution of the situation would require that the signed agreements and the agreed framework for implementation of the EEA and Norway grants are honoured and respected. As soon as the Hungarian government express commitment to resolve the open</p>

⁵⁴ See: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/23/remarks-president-clinton-global-initiative>.

⁵⁵ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/kulgaszdasagi-es-kulugyminiszterium/hirek/a-magyar-nep-szabadsagszereto>.

⁵⁶ See e.g.: http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/6335/Politikai_befolyas_alatt_allo_halozatot_feltenek_biraloink.

⁵⁷ The audit report is available in English at: <http://kehi.kormany.hu/download/2/b2/c0000/Audit%20Report.pdf>.

⁵⁸ See e.g.: <http://abcug.hu/kehi-feljelenti-az-okotars-alapitvanyt/>.

⁵⁹ See in English: <http://budapestbeacon.com/featured-articles/kehi-reports-okotars-for-financial-malfeasance-and-fraud/>.

	<p>issues, including a satisfactory solution for the NGO fund, Norway is willing to resume discussions to find solutions within the frame of existing agreements.”⁶⁰</p> <p>→ On 31 October 2014, the Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs said with regard to the GCO’s audit report: “We don’t attach a lot of credibility to that report to put it mildly.”⁶¹</p> <p>→ On 4 November 2014 the Ambassador of Norway announced that the respective Norwegian minister had not accepted the invitation by the head of the Prime Minister’s Office to discuss the GCO’s audit report, since Norway considers the state audit unlawful.⁶²</p>
<p>22 October 2014</p> <p>Association tied to the governing party demands new rules on foreign funding of NGOs</p>	<p>On 22 October 2014, a Hungarian NGO named “Civil Unity Forum” called upon the Minister of Justice to take legislative steps to enhance the transparency with regard to the funds received by Hungarian NGOs from abroad, and suggested e.g. that NGOs should be obliged to submit their agreements with their donors to the government, and the parties to these agreements should acknowledge the universal supervisory power of the Hungarian state.⁶³ (The Civil Unity Forum undeniably has very close ties with the governing parties, organizes marches in support of the governing party Fidesz and the government, installed public billboards and posters in the value of HUF 500 million to criticize opposition leaders during the 2014 national elections campaign, and received altogether 60 million HUF from the party foundation of the Fidesz in the last two years.⁶⁴)</p>
<p>12 November 2014</p> <p>GCO launches criminal procedure and requests tax audit</p>	<p>It was reported on 12 November 2014 that the GCO made a formal complaint to the police to initiate a criminal procedure, claiming that the consortium led by the Ökotárs violated the rules on incompatibility, and contributed to the irregular payment of 250 million HUF (€ 813,147.55) by the illicit amendment of grant agreements and accepting non-eligible project costs. It was also reported that the GCO requested the National Tax and Customs Administration to conduct an extraordinary tax audit on the basis of the findings of the report.⁶⁵</p>
<p>15 December 2014</p> <p>PM on registering NGOs funded from abroad</p>	<p>The Prime Minister of Hungary stated in an interview given to Bloomberg in December 2014 that he would back legislation to force non-government organisations funded from abroad to be specially registered, because it is important to know “who’s in the background” of such groups.⁶⁶</p>
<p>16 December 2014</p> <p>Audit by the Prime Minister’s Office in relation to the Swiss NGO</p>	<p>After the GCO’s audit started, payments were suspended by Switzerland under the Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Programme. In November 2014 Switzerland decided to proceed with the payments, since they were of the view that it was proven that the Ökotárs was trustworthy. However, the Prime Minister’s Office decided that it would carry out an investigation/audit regarding the use of the Swiss NGO Fund itself, and it was reported on</p>

⁶⁰ For the full statement in English, see: <http://www.norvegia.hu/Norsk/EEA-and-Norway-Grants1/EEA-and-Norway-Grants/The-Norwegian-response-to-the-KEHI-report/>.

⁶¹ See in English: <http://www.thelocal.no/2014/11/04/beintett-a-norveg-kormany-lazarnak-nem-fogadjak-el-a-meghivasat/>.

⁶² See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2014/11/04/beintett-a-norveg-kormany-lazarnak-nem-fogadjak-el-a-meghivasat/>. The related letter of Minister Helgesen is available here in English: <http://www.norvegia.hu/Norsk/EEA-and-Norway-Grants1/EEA-and-Norway-Grants/Helgesens-response-to-Mr-Lazar-on-the-KEHI-report/>.

⁶³ See: <http://civilosszefogas.hu/felkeres-jogszabaly-alkotasra/>.

⁶⁴ See: <http://atlatszo.hu/2014/06/06/20-millio-forint-partenz-290-millio-forint-maganadomany-a-kormany-civiljeinek/>.

⁶⁵ See e.g.: <http://nol.hu/belfold/feljelentett-civilek-1497967>.

⁶⁶ See in English: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-12-15/hungary-premier-orban-sticks-to-maverick-path-as-u-s-ties-sour>.

Fund	<p>16 December 2014 that until the 45-day governmental investigation procedure is over, no payments can be realized from the Swiss NGO Fund.⁶⁷</p> <p>→ At the end of 2014 a tripartite agreement was concluded between Switzerland, the Hungarian government and the Ökotárs in order to ensure that the NGOs supported receive their grant moneys. (Payments had not been realized from the Swiss NGO Fund since August 2014, affecting almost 30 projects, several of which had to be suspended.⁶⁸) The agreement was a provisional one (applying only to the period of the investigation), and set out that payments shall be made through the governmental Széchenyi Program Office. However, in-merit coordination of the Swiss NGO Fund is still carried out by the consortium.⁶⁹</p>
<i>19 January 2015</i> Prosecutorial and tax authority investigation of supported NGOs	<p>On 19 January 2015 the Ökotárs informed the press that the National Tax and Customs Administration investigates two NGOs which received support from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund, while the prosecutor's office investigates the lawfulness of the operations of another two such NGOs (these are not criminal investigations). Thus, state investigations not only focus on consortium members any more, but also the NGOs supported by the NGO Fund.⁷⁰</p>
<i>23 January 2015</i> Court decision labels police raid of NGOs unlawful	<p>→ On 23 January 2015, the Buda Central District Court ruled on the complaint submitted by the Ökotárs to challenge the lawfulness of the police raid of the consortium's offices and the searches conducted in the offices and in the homes of Ökotárs representatives in September 2014. The court stated that the ordering of the searches and seizures was unlawful, since there was no well-founded suspicion that the criminal offence of embezzlement had been committed and there was no investigation in place into "unlicensed financial activities" (the other offence that the police referred to as the basis of its actions).⁷¹</p>
<i>28 January 2015</i> GCO informs the Government about terminating state audit	<p>The head of the GCO informed the President of the Governmental Round Table of Equal Opportunities in a letter in January 2015 that the state audit of the EEA/Norway Grants had been completed and the audit report has been published on the GCO's website. This letter is the sole official document that states or provides information about completing and terminating the state audit.</p>
<i>11 February 2015</i> Independent audit report in favour of fund operators	<p>→ In February 2015, the results of an independent evaluation, conducted by a consulting company commissioned by the FMO, were published. The evaluators found e.g. that the "selection of the current Fund Operator in Hungary has been an excellent one", that "the selection process in all components of the programme ha[s] been organized in a professional and transparent way", and that it was "competitive with high standards". The report also concluded that it is "of critical importance that the NGO Programme in Hungary continues</p>

⁶⁷ See e.g.: <http://444.hu/2014/12/16/svajc-mar-utalna-az-okotarsnak-a-civil-alapba-de-nem-hagyjuk/>.

⁶⁸ See e.g.: <http://www.hir24.hu/belfold/2014/12/16/lazar-a-norveg-utan-a-svajci-alapra-is-raszall/>.

⁶⁹ See e.g.: <http://vs.hu/kozelet/osszes/lazarek-kiturtak-az-okotarsat-az-alapitvany-cafol-1230>.

⁷⁰ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150119_Okotars_Mar_a_tamogatott_civileket_is_viz.

⁷¹ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150129_A_birosag_helyt_adott_az_Okotars_panaszan.

	its implementation independently from the Government and operated by the current consortium”. ⁷²
<i>20 February 2015</i> PM's Office: NGO leaders should account for personal assets	On 20 February 2015, during a sitting in the Parliament the head of the Prime Minister's Office stated that NGOs are important for the Government, but it requires transparency from the civil organisations, and elaborated that NGOs should not only account for where their money comes from, but also for their leaders' personal assets. ⁷³
<i>23 February and 28 May 2015</i> Court turns to Constitutional Court regarding the suspension of tax numbers	→ On 23 February 2015, after members of the consortium distributing the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund requested a judicial review of the decision suspending their tax numbers, the competent court set a date for the hearing in the case of the Ökotárs, the DemNet and the Autonómia Foundation, and suspended the application of the tax authority's decision until the end of the court procedure, allowing the NGOs to continue their operation. ⁷⁴ In addition, on 28 May 2015 the court proceeding in the tax number case of the Kárpátok Foundation (the fourth consortium member) decided to suspend the court procedure and filed a request to the Constitutional Court for the constitutional review of the decision suspending the organisation's tax number and of the government decree on the GCO. ⁷⁵
<i>23 March 2015</i> NGO wins FOI lawsuit related to GCO audit	→ On 23 March 2015, the first instance court decided in a lawsuit launched by the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union that the GCO shall disclose whether the GCO's investigation was ordered upon the instruction of the Government, the Prime Minister and the respective Minister, whether the instruction was given in writing or orally, and if in writing, than the GCO should also disclose the document containing the instruction. ⁷⁶
<i>26 May 2015</i> Letter of Norway about settling issues of suspended funds	According to the information released by the Prime Minister's Office, Vidar Helgesen, the Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs sent a letter to János Lázár, and offered an official meeting between Norway and Hungary to establish ways of cooperation and the settlement of issues that led to the suspension of Norwegian funds of Hungarian governmental projects in May 2014.
<i>28 May 2015</i> Independent company concludes that handling of the NGO Fund is	→ The London-based PKF Littlejohn accounting company, after conducting the review of the distribution of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund in Hungary upon the request of Norway, concluded that the handling of the fund and the evaluation mechanisms in place complied with the respective regulations. The company's report also referred to the efficiency of the NGO Fund. In addition, the PKF Littlejohn reviewed also some projects supported by the NGO Fund and these investigations also had a positive result in general,

⁷² The country report on Hungary prepared in the framework of the mid-term evaluation of the of the NGO programmes under the EEA and Norway Grants is available here in English: <http://www.ngonorway.org/images/OutoftheBoxPart2COUNTRYREPORTS-1.pdf>, pp 28-47. The main evaluation report is available here: <http://www.ngonorway.org/images/OutoftheBoxPart1MAINREPORT-3.pdf>.

⁷³ See e.g.:

http://index.hu/belfold/2015/02/20/lazar_a_civil_szervezetek_vezetoinek_a_szemelyes_vagyonukkal_is_el_kell_szamolniuk#.

⁷⁴ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150224_Egyelore_visszakapta_adoszamat_az_Okotars.

⁷⁵ See e.g.: <https://norvegcivilalap.hu/hu/node/11451>, <http://444.hu/2015/05/28/az-alkotmanybirosag-ele-kerul-a-norveg-civil-penzek-sorsarol-donto-alapitvany-ugye/>.

⁷⁶ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150323_Pert_vesztett_a_Kehi_a_civileknel_elrende.

appropriate	although some minor mistakes were revealed which were said to be addressed in the near future. ⁷⁷
28 May 2015 National Anti-Corruption Program foresees severing rules on NGOs	In May 2015, the Government published its National Anti-Corruption Program for the period between 2015 and 2018. The program has been weakened on several points, for example it does not address the declaration of assets by the Members of the Parliament. At the same time the program foresees the review of the regulation on civil society organisations regarding their transparency and examining the possibilities of widening the scope of civil society leaders obliged to submit a declaration of assets. ⁷⁸
23 June 2015 Official meeting of FMO and Hungarian government	The official meeting between the representatives of the Norwegian and Hungarian governments took place in Brussels and it was a first step towards a new cooperation and the settling of issues that led to the suspension of Norwegian funds of Hungarian governmental projects on 9 May 2014. ⁷⁹
30 June 2015 Prosecutorial investigation of supported NGOs finds only administrative mistakes	In June 2015, the investigation of the prosecutor's office into the lawfulness of the operation of seven organisations who received funding from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund was concluded. The investigation revealed administrative irregularities with regard to three organisations (e.g. one of the foundations failed to publish its annual reports for 2012 and 2013 on its website, while another foundation remedied the violation of the rules after it became aware of the prosecution's investigation). Three organisations investigated have already ceased to operate, and in one instance the legal basis of the investigation ceased. ⁸⁰
30 June 2015 Court rules that the governing party violated an NGO's right to good reputation	→ On 30 June 2015, a final judgment was reached in the Hungarian Helsinki Committee's lawsuit against the governing party and its spokesperson. The court concluded that by stating at a press conference in August 2013 that NGOs including the Hungarian Helsinki Committee are "fake" and "paid extras", which regularly attack the Hungarian government's actions in return for "American money", the governing party and its spokesperson violated the Hungarian Helsinki Committee's right to good reputation. The decision obliged the respondents to apologize publicly for their statements. ⁸¹

⁷⁷ See e.g.:

http://www.norvegia.hu/News_and_events/EGT_%C3%A9s_Norv%C3%A9g_Finansz%C3%ADroz%C3%A1si_Mechanizmus/A-Norveg-Civil-Tamogatasi-Alap-vizsgalata/#.VctCkbXhr96.

⁷⁸ See e.g.: <http://vs.hu/kozelet/osszes/a-civileket-veszi-celba-a-nemzeti-korrupcioellenes-program-0528>. For the respective parts of the National Anti-Corruption Program in Hungarian, see:

<http://www.kormany.hu/download/5/e8/50000/Nemzeti%20Korrupci%C3%B3ellenes%20Program.pdf#!DocumentBrowse>, pp. 34-36.

⁷⁹ <http://vs.hu/kozelet/osszes/lazarek-egy-ev-haboruzas-utan-bekulhetnek-norvegiaval-0610#!s5>

⁸⁰ See e.g.: <http://vs.hu/kozelet/osszes/a-kormany-igazoltnak-latja-a-fellepeset-a-norveg-civil-alap-ugyeben-0630#!s0>.

⁸¹ See e.g.: <http://helsinki.hu/jogeros-a-hoppal-ugyben-hozott-itelet>, <http://budapesttimes.hu/2015/07/03/helsinki-committee-wins-libel-case-against-fidesz/>.

15 July 2015 Court rejects NGOs' compensation claim	→ Two consortium members (the DemNet and the Kárpátok Foundation) sued the GCO for compensation because of the procedures conducted against them. However, on 15 July 2015 the Metropolitan Tribunal rejected their claims. ⁸²
28 July 2015 GCO discloses the list of NGOs subject to audit	→ On 28 July 2015, upon the request of Transparency International Hungary, the GCO disclosed the list of organisations supported by the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund which were subject to the GCO's audit earlier. ⁸³
5 October 2015 CC ruling on the law regarding tax number suspension	On 5 October 2015, the Constitutional Court ruled that the legal provision on the basis of which the tax number of the consortium members distributing the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund was suspended was constitutional. ⁸⁴ The decision was delivered with a 4-1 vote. In her dissenting opinion, Constitutional Court judge Ágnes Czirine claimed that the challenged provision renders judicial review formal and void and therefore violates the right to a fair procedure.
7 October 2015 Criminal investigation terminated	In October 2015, the criminal investigation against Ökotárs and 17 other NGOs was terminated by the tax authority's investigative unit. ⁸⁵ The basis of the decision was partly that no criminal offence had been committed, and partly that the continuation of the investigation was unlikely to yield any result. The GCO submitted a complaint against the decision. ⁸⁶
21 October 2015 PM's Office: consortium functioned unlawfully	Subsequently, on 21 October 2015, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, János Lázár claimed in an interview that despite the termination of the investigation, he was of the view that Ökotárs carried out its activities in an unlawful manner when it distributed the funds discriminatively. He claimed that his conviction was based on the fact that he had read all the documents of the case. ⁸⁷
30 October 2015 PM on migrants and George Soros	In its weekly radio interview on 30 October 2015, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said, among others, the following: the flooding in of migrants is enhanced by those activists "who support everything that weakens the nation states", and that this Western way of thinking and network of activists may best be hallmarked by the name of George Soros. ⁸⁸
6 November 2015 Coalition party MP's letter to	István Hollik, an MP of the Christian Democratic People's Party (the coalition partner of Fidesz) sent an open letter to a number of NGO's supported by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), stating that George Soros regards it his task to eliminate – as obstacles –

⁸² See e.g.: <http://kehi.kormany.hu/http-os-mti-hu-hirek-108953-a-kormanyzati-ellenorzesi-hivatal-kozlemenye>, http://index.hu/belfold/2015/07/15/nem_kapnak_karteritest_a_norveg_alapos_szervezetek/.

⁸³ See: <http://bit.ly/1LSvfoW> and <http://bit.ly/1Mz960D>.

⁸⁴ The respective decision of the Constitutional Court is available here in Hungarian: <http://public.mkab.hu/dev/dontesek.nsf/0/5216BF6385013BEEC1257E8A00583B49?OpenDocument>.

⁸⁵ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20151020_Megszuntettek_a_nyomozast_az_Okotars_elle.

⁸⁶ See e.g.: <http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1074232-a-kehi-nem-szall-le-az-okotarsrol>.

⁸⁷ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20151021_Lazar_kitart_amellett_hogy_az_Okotars_bun.

⁸⁸ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/hirek/europa-nepei-kezdenek-felebredni>.

<p>NGOs funded by OSF</p>	<p>the borders of sovereign countries so that refugees could have an easier access to Europe, and stated that it is a well-known fact that the Soros Foundation's (sic!) board members decided to fund the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Transparency International Hungary and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee with hundreds of millions of forints. The MP went on to say that on this basis it seems justified to presume that George Soros wishes to impose his opinions concerning the migration problems of Hungary through the organisations supported by the foundation hallmarked by his name. István Hollik asked the above NGOs to clarify whether it is fair to presume that they support George Soros's ideas, and stated that they should also make it clear whether they accept that by doing so they incite crowds of people to disregard fundamental values laid down in Hungarian and international law.⁸⁹</p>
<p><i>24 November 2015</i> Agreement between FMO and Hungarian Government</p>	<p>At the annual meeting of the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 for Hungary, officials of the FMO and representatives of the Hungarian government concluded an agreement about lifting the suspension of EEA/Norway Grants funds for government projects. It was an express condition of this agreement that the Hungarian government terminates all proceedings against organisations handling and receiving grants from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund, and that it guarantees that it would not launch any more such proceedings against these NGOs.⁹⁰</p>
<p><i>9-11 December 2015</i> Suspension of funds to Hungary under EEA/Norway Grants is lifted</p>	<p>In December 2015, the suspension of the disbursement of funds to Hungary under the EEA/Norway Grants scheme, aimed at reducing economic and social disparities in Hungary, was lifted, because the Hungarian authorities had fulfilled the conditions set by Norway regarding the control functions and implementation of the grants in Hungary. The Hungarian authorities had also guaranteed that they will respect the agreements on the management of the funds allocated by Norway to Hungarian NGOs.⁹¹</p>
<p><i>11 December 2015</i> Anti-NGO statements at delegate congress of Fidesz</p>	<p>János Lázár, outgoing Vice President of the governing Fidesz party and head of the Prime Minister's Office, called the civil sector the third pole of politics at the party's delegate congress in December 2015. He also voiced his opinion that the reason why this third pole had not yet been incorporated into the political sphere was mainly that there were NGOs which were paid to demonstrate and advocate for certain causes and who enjoyed the support of George Soros.⁹²</p>
<p><i>22 December 2015</i> Press release of MTI: negotiations with Norway ended with success and the "sovereignty of</p>	<p>A Government press release issued through the Hungarian News Service (MTI) on 22 December 2015 said the following: "The negotiations with Norway about lifting the suspension of Norwegian Funds of governmental projects were deemed successful by the Hungarian Government. As a result of the agreement the sovereignty of Hungary is entirely guaranteed which means that in the future foreign governments will not be able to distribute grants in Hungary without the cooperation and control of the Hungarian government. Moreover, through this we achieved that Ökotárs Foundation will not be a party to the</p>

⁸⁹ See: <http://www.fidesz.hu/hirek/2015-11-06/hollik-istvan-nyilt-levelben-fordult-jogvedo-szervezetekhez/>.

⁹⁰ See in English: <http://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Hungary-Annual-Meeting-24-November-20151.pdf>.

⁹¹ See in English here: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/suspension-of-eea-and-norway-grants-payments-to-hungary-lifted/id2467020/>, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-hungary-funding-idUSKBN0TT1YR20151210>, <http://www.politico.eu/article/orban-backs-down-in-battle-with-norwegian-ngos/>, <http://www.norvegia.hu/Norsk/EEA-and-Norway-Grants1/EEA-and-Norway-Grants/Lifting-of-suspension-of-payments-from-EEA-and-Norway-Grants-to-Hungary/#top>.

⁹² See e.g.: <http://nol.hu/belfold/visszaszamlalassal-es-vastapssal-kezdodott-a-fidesz-kongresszusa-1579787>.

<p>Hungary is guaranteed”</p>	<p>consortium that awards and distributes the grants in the next funding period. Our debate with Norway started because of the governmental concerns about the performance of Ökotárs, and these concerns are still valid.”⁹³ However, the above cited Hungarian “control” is not mentioned at all in the memo of the Brussels meeting between the FMO and Hungarian Government representatives, which took place on 24 November 2016.</p>
<p><i>January–February 2016</i></p> <p>Tax authority investigations end without any result</p>	<p>Procedures launched by the National Tax and Customs Administration into NGOs were closed by January–February 2016 without any result. The written protocols closing the investigations all used the same wording, and the National Tax and Customs Administration stated in them that no further official proceedings would be launched on the basis of the investigations.</p>
<p><i>16 February 2016</i></p> <p>UN Special Rapporteur criticizes Hungary</p>	<p>The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders pointed out in his end of mission statement issued on 16 February 2016, after his visit to Hungary, that human rights defenders in the country “are increasingly working in a rather polarised and politicised environment,” while criticising attempts to de-legitimize defenders and undermine their peaceful and legitimate activities through criminal defamation and excessive administrative and financial pressure. The UN independent expert called on the Government of Hungary to refrain from stigmatising and intimidating human rights defenders, and ensure that they can conduct their work in an enabling legal and administrative environment.⁹⁴</p>
<p><i>20 May 2016</i></p> <p>PM: Soros-funded NGOs are a “background power”</p>	<p>On 20 May 2016, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stated in an interview that organisations sponsored by Hungarian-American business executive George Soros are a “background power,” who were not elected by anyone, but “they still constantly aim to gain political influence”.⁹⁵</p>
<p><i>25 May 2016</i></p> <p>Listing of NGOs supported by George Soros</p>	<p>A news portal – enjoying state subvention – wrote about a “loud but minor human rights and civil activist network, whose media representation is much larger than their social support” and is supported by George Soros, and so was referred to as the “Soros network”. The article also expressed concerns about the transparency of the listed NGOs’ financing. The list of NGOs corresponded to the earlier lists that appeared in relation to the government attacks against the NGOs receiving support through the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund.⁹⁶</p>
<p><i>25 May 2016</i></p> <p>PM’s Office refers to national security reports in relation to George Soros and</p>	<p>In one of his statements about the political activities of George Soros, János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister’s Office stated that the “entire domestic pro-migrant civil sector belongs to the sphere of influence of Soros,” and stated that his opinion is based on reports prepared by national security services.⁹⁷</p> <p>→As a result of this statement János Lázár had to clarify before the Parliament’s National Security Committee why and under which circumstances was George Soros and organisations allegedly linked to him under surveillance and why he revealed this confidential</p>

⁹³ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/hirek/a-magyar-kormany-sikeresen-targyalt-norvegiaval>.

⁹⁴ See: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17037&LangID=E>. The final report of the UN Special Rapporteur, published in January 2017, is available here: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/52/Add.2.

⁹⁵ See: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-interjuja-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-20160525/>.

⁹⁶ See: <http://888.hu/article-a-lista-a-soros-halozat-hazai-kitartottjai>.

⁹⁷ See e.g.: <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20160525-lazar-titkosszolgalati-jelentesek-bizonyitjak-soros-magyarorszag-befolyasat>.

supported NGOs	information in public. In his answer, the head of the Prime Minister's Office stated that no civil organisations were under surveillance by national security services. ⁹⁸
8 June 2016 Suspicious device found in an NGO office	The Eötvös Károly Policy Institute (EKINT, one of the organisations listed earlier as part of the "Soros network"), reported on 8 June 2016 that an electronic device had been found in its offices, which was attached to telephone and internet cables, and, according to an expert opinion, was suitable for data transmission. ⁹⁹ The Prime Minister's internal security advisor claimed on the same day that if the bug had been placed in EKINT's office by the Hungarian security services, it could not have been found so easily and that he regards it impossible that the device is affiliated with domestic security services. ¹⁰⁰ The criminal investigation launched in the case on 4 July 2016 was terminated by the police on 29 August 2016, and the EKINT's subsequent complaint against the termination was rejected by the prosecutor's office. ¹⁰¹
11 June 2016 Government spokesperson: Soros-NGOs use illicit measures	On 11 June 2016, the government-friendly online news portal, <i>Magyar Időke</i> , published an interview with Government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács, who stated that NGOs linked to George Soros had a positive role after the transition in the '90s, but nowadays they have crossed the line and try to intervene with the life of Central and Eastern European societies through illicit measures. ¹⁰²
29 June 2016 Court rules that Fidesz violated an NGO's right to good reputation	→ In June 2016, the lawsuit the Hungarian Helsinki Committee filed against Fidesz was concluded with a final judgment ruling that the Fidesz had violated the HHC's right to a good reputation. The lawsuit was launched by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee in 2015, after Fidesz had stated that the Hungarian Helsinki Committee is a "fake" NGO, which "executes the political orders" of international actors and tampers with data concerning asylum-seekers. The court obliged the Fidesz to refrain from such rights violations in the future, issue an apology and pay damages in the amount of HUF 1 million. (The judgment was later, in June 2017, also upheld by the Curia. ¹⁰³)
29 June 2016 and 6 October 2016 Supreme Court ruling result: it is revealed that GCO audit was ordered by the PM	→ On 29 June 2016, the Supreme Court of Hungary decided in a lawsuit launched by the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union in 2014 that the GCO shall disclose on whose instruction the GCO's state audit and investigation into NGOs was launched, whether the instruction was given in writing or orally, and if in writing, then the GCO should also disclose the document containing the instruction. ¹⁰⁴ On 6 October 2016, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union published the documentation received by them based on the above Supreme Court ruling, which showed that the state audit of the GCO into NGOs was launched on the basis of the instruction of the Prime Minister himself in May 2014. ¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20160526_lazar_janos_soros_gyorgy_menekultek, <http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1096169-soros-ugy--lazar-a-bizottsag-elott-magyarazta/>.

⁹⁹ See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2016/06/08/professzionalis-poloskat-talaltak-az-eotvos-intezet-irodajaban/>.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20160608_bakondi_gyorgy_lehallgatas_eotvos_karoly_intezet_poloska.

¹⁰¹ See: <http://ekint.org/maganszfera-adatvedelem/2016-10-27/nem-zorog-a-haraszt-megis-lehallgathattak-az-ekint-munkatarsait>.

¹⁰² See: <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/soros-gyorgy-hatalmi-kiserlete-740266/>.

¹⁰³ See: <http://www.helsinki.hu/vegleges-a-fidesz-pert-bukott-a-helsinki-bizottsaggal-szemben/>.

¹⁰⁴ See: <http://tasz.hu/informacioszabadsag/kuria-rabolintott-hogy-megismerhessuk-ki-rendelte-el-norveg-civilek-vegzasalat>.

¹⁰⁵ See: <http://tasz.hu/informacioszabadsag/kideritettuk-hogy-orban-viktor-szemelyesen-rendelte-el-civilek-vegzasalat>.

<p>26 September 2016</p> <p>Fidesz MP says he initiated national security inspection of NGOs</p>	<p>MP Szilárd Németh, Vice President of the Fidesz and of the Parliament's National Security Committee announced on 26 September 2016 in an interview that he requested the National Security Committee and the national security services to inspect the organisations "cooperating with the Soros network". The MP stated that he identified 22 such organisations, and claimed that these organisations openly violate Hungarian and European laws, and participate in politics unlawfully, with "black money".¹⁰⁶ (Later on, in August 2017 it was revealed that the MP had in fact did not request or instruct national security services to investigate – given that he had no right to –, but only "raised the security services' attention to the risks" entailed in the operation of NGOs funded from abroad.¹⁰⁷)</p>
<p>14 December 2016</p> <p>Spring legislative agenda foresees amendment of rules on NGOs</p>	<p>In 14 December 2016, the legislative agenda of the Parliament for 2017 spring was submitted to the Parliament by the Deputy Prime Minister, foreseeing the amendment of the law on civil organisations and the scope of those obliged to submit a declaration of assets.¹⁰⁸ The document refers to the National Anti-Corruption Program and a related Government resolution from 2015, which stated that in order to ensure the transparent operation of NGOs, the regulation on NGOs and the possibilities of widening the scope of those obliged to submit a declaration of assets should be examined.¹⁰⁹</p>
<p>15 December 2016</p> <p>PM: 2017 will be about "driving out" Soros</p>	<p>In an interview published on 15 December 2016, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán claimed that in 2017 states will aim to "drive out" Soros and the powers symbolized by him from their countries. He claimed that it will be revealed where the money comes from, what secret service connections there are, and what kind of interests NGOs represent.¹¹⁰</p>
<p>10-11 January 2017</p> <p>Fidesz Vice President: "fake" NGOs supported by Soros have to be "swept out" from Hungary</p>	<p>MP Szilárd Németh, Vice President of the Fidesz and its parliamentary group stated at a press conference on 10 January 2017 that "the Soros empire's fake civil organisations are maintained so that global capital and the world of political correctness can be imposed on national governments. These organisations have to be rolled back with every means, and I think they have to be swept out of here." He added that he felt that the "international possibility" to do that had just emerged, referring to the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, and that the Fidesz will support legislative efforts such as the planned law prescribing that NGO leaders have to submit a declaration of assets, so that they can "see clearly".¹¹¹ The next morning in a television interview he specifically named the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and Transparency International Hungary as the NGOs that have to be "rolled back" and "swept out". He also said that these NGOs want to have a say in politics without "legitimate participation", i.e. having been elected.¹¹²</p>

¹⁰⁶ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2016/09/26/nemeth-szilard-rakuldene-a-titkosszolgalatokat-a-sorossal-egyuttmukodo-szervezetekre>.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2017/08/02/nemeth_szilard_hazudott_nem_kuldt_e_a_titkosszolgalatot_a_civilekre/.

¹⁰⁸ The legislative program is available here:

http://www.parlament.hu/documents/10181/56621/Tvalk_program_2017_tavasz.pdf/77d69862-7613-4fe1-a490-d15975f5e81f (see item 37.).

¹⁰⁹ Government Resolution 1336/2015. (V. 27.) on the Adoption of the National Anti-Corruption Program and the Plan on the Related Measures for 2015 and 2016, Paragraph 11, available here in Hungarian: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=175782.293609.

¹¹⁰ See: <https://888.hu/article-orban-2017-a-lazadas-eve-lesz>.

¹¹¹ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/01/10/nemeth-szilard-minden-eszkozzel-el-kell-innen-takaritani-a-civil-szervezeteket>.

¹¹² See: <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20170111-kiderult-ezektol-a-civil-szervezetektol-akar-megszabadulni-a-fidesz>.

<p><i>11 January 2017</i></p> <p>Coalition partner MP: obligation for NGO leaders to submit a declaration of assets may be justified</p>	<p>On 11 January 2017, István Hollik, MP of the Christian Democratic People's Party stated at a press conference that there are NGOs which, even though they are registered as civil organisations, have primarily political goals, and even though they may not receive public funds, they may be corrupted, so the suggestion that NGO leaders should submit a declaration of assets may be justified. He added that the form for the declaration of assets will probably be the same as the one for MPs and Secretaries of State. He continued to say that there are NGOs who do not contribute at all to the economic and social development of Hungary, serve political aims, and are financed from abroad, thus, there is no point in their existence, and it is a natural reaction to place them under a stricter regulation.¹¹³</p>
<p><i>12 January 2017</i></p> <p>Controversial statements on Government plans regarding NGOs</p>	<p>At another press conference held on 12 January 2017, MP Szilárd Németh made controversial statements as to which NGOs are "fake" and which ones are "useful" in his view, referred to national security risks with regard to the activities of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee in relation to refugees, and said that even though they do not intend to "ban" the NGOs named, those about whom it turns out that "they serve the interests of foreign powers and the international big business as opposed to Hungarians, have nothing to do here", and have to be stepped up against.¹¹⁴</p> <p>Also on 12 January 2017, at the regularly held government press conference "Government Info", János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister's Office asked for "understanding" regarding the statements of MP Szilárd Németh, claiming that "the national wing" reacts sensitively to activities aimed at influencing public life, and claimed in relation to that that the appearance of "illegal migrants" at the border of Hungary was organized from abroad. He stated that "sweeping out" NGOs as such is not on the agenda of the Government, but he expressed his view that those who want to influence politics have to undertake publicity.¹¹⁵</p>
<p><i>13 January 2017</i></p> <p>Government spokesperson also criticizes NGOs</p>	<p>On 13 January 2017, Government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács suggested in a television interview in relation to NGOs funded by George Soros that people calling themselves human rights defenders and civils fraternize or cooperate with terrorist and human smuggling organisations, willingly or unwillingly. He also stated that as far as its content goes, the Government agrees with the statements of MP Szilárd Németh, and went on to say that even though these NGOs were not elected by anybody, they still form opinions and try to take concrete political steps. The spokesperson also stated with regard to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee that while in 2006 (when the Fidesz suggested that the NGO receives a decoration) it strived to restore elements related to the fundamental legal order and the concept of democracy, thus is not the case anymore: the NGO may say that its goal is the latter, but in reality, it wants to make politics.¹¹⁶</p>
<p><i>10 February 2017</i></p> <p>PM: Hungary</p>	<p>In his annual state of the nation speech on 10 February 2017, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the following: "in 2017 we will also need to take up the struggle against international organisations' increasingly strong activists. [...] It is a problem that foreign funding is being</p>

¹¹³ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/01/11/hollik-istvan-a-civil-szervezetek-vezetoinak-olyan-vagyonnyilatkozatot-kell-majd-tenniuk-mint-a-kepviseloknek-es-az-allamtitkaroknak>.

¹¹⁴ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170112_nemeth_szilard_civilek_tasz_soros_gyorgy_sajtotajekoztato_helsinki_bizottsag_transparency_international

¹¹⁵ See e.g.: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/video/kormanyinfo-75-vissza-kell-allitani-az-idegenrendeszeti-orizetet>, <https://444.hu/2017/01/12/lazar-megertest-ker-nemeth-szilard-nyilatkozataihoz>.

¹¹⁶ See: <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20170113-kormanysovivo-a-civil-szervezetek-terrorszervezetekkel-cimboralnak>.

<p>needs to take up struggle against international organisations and their Hungarian branches</p>	<p>secretly used to influence Hungarian politics. [...] [T]he question is whether we should yield to covert foreign attempts to exert influence. We are not talking about non-governmental organisations fighting to promote an important cause, but about paid activists from international organisations and their branch offices in Hungary. Are we going to do something to at least ensure transparency, and make these issues publicly known?" The Prime Minister continued by referring to the "transnational empire of George Soros, with its international heavy artillery and huge sums of money", and stated that "the organisations of George Soros are working tirelessly to bring hundreds of thousands of migrants into Europe".¹¹⁷</p>
<p><i>17 February 2017</i> Fidesz plans on submitting Bill on the transparency of NGO funding</p>	<p>The head of the Fidesz parliamentary group, Lajos Kósa said at a press conference on 17 February 2017 that the Fidesz parliamentary group plans to submit a Bill to the Parliament in March 2017 with the aim to ensure the transparency of the Hungarian branches of international organisations, stating that there are "many organisations who have an extensive network of agents in Hungary". According to Lajos Kósa, the reason behind the planned Bill is that "the Hungarian voters should know if these organisations want to exert influence in Hungary by using foreign funding". According to the plans, consequences of non-compliance will include revoking the organisations' tax numbers, so that they cannot operate. He added that they do not plan to oblige NGO leaders to submit a declaration of assets.¹¹⁸ (It has to be added in this regard that it is an existing obligation for public benefit civil organisations in Hungary to publish their finances.)</p>
<p><i>20 February 2017</i> PM announces national consultation on "foreign influencing"</p>	<p>In his speech opening the Parliament's spring session, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced that a "national consultation" will be held about five threats to Hungary, including "illegal migration" and the "foreign influencing attempts".¹¹⁹</p>
<p><i>21 February 2017</i> Fidesz faction discusses planned rules on foreign funding of NGOs</p>	<p>It was reported on 21 February 2017 by the media that at the parliamentary group meeting of Fidesz the NGOs supported by the Open Society Foundations and specifically the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and Transparency International Hungary were named as the target group of the envisaged Bill on the foreign funding of NGOs. According to sources, the threshold for the sum of support from abroad to be reported is still to be established, and it seems that a new registry category, the "organisation supported from abroad" will be introduced for those NGOs whose foreign funding exceeds a certain sum or proportion. Sources also claimed that it was voiced at the meeting that the real aim of these steps is to place the data acquired into the "political communication space".¹²⁰</p>

¹¹⁷ The Prime Minister's speech is available here in English: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-state-of-the-nation-address-2/>.

¹¹⁸ See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2017/02/17/folytatodik-a-fidesz-civil-szervezetek-elleni-arnyekbokszo-lasa/>, <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20170217-kosa-marciusban-kerul-a-haz-ele-a-civilek-atlathatosagarol-szolo-javaslat>.

¹¹⁹ See e.g.: <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20170220-orban-viktor-napirend-elott-ot-veszely-nemzeti-konzultacio.html>.

¹²⁰ See: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170221_civilek_soros_kormany_nemeth_szilard.

<p>21 February 2017</p> <p>Norway: Hungary will have no veto over NGO Fund</p>	<p>On 21 February 2017, it was also reported by the media that even though the Prime Minister's Office claimed that the Hungarian Government will have a veto power with regard to the selection of the Hungarian organisation managing the funds from the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund, the spokesperson of the Norwegian Minister responsible for EU affairs stated that those managing the distribution of the NGO Fund will be selected by the donor countries instead.¹²¹</p>
<p>1–9 March 2017</p> <p>Ministries refuse HCLU's request to hold public consultation regarding the planned Bill on NGOs</p>	<p>In a letter dated 1 March 2017, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU) asked the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Human Resources to ensure the possibility of public consultation on the envisaged law on NGOs, thus to publish the draft Bill before it is submitted to the Parliament and to allow the public to comment on it.¹²² In a letter dated 7 March 2017, the Ministry of Justice replied that one of the thematic working groups of the Human Rights Roundtable¹²³ foresees to put the issue on its agenda, and when that happens, they will invite the HCLU to that meeting. The Ministry of Human Resources replied the same on 9 March 2017.</p> <p>→ In its responses to the Ministries, submitted on 20 March 2017, the HCLU pointed out that discussing the issue in one of the thematic working groups of the Human Rights Roundtable is insufficient, and upheld its view that a proper public consultation should take place regarding the new law, since the issue it covers affects the right to association and the freedom of speech, and since in the case of Bills prepared by Ministries public consultation is obligatory. (According to the legislative agenda of the Parliament for spring 2017,¹²⁴ the respective law on NGOs was foreseen to be prepared by the Minister of Human Resources.)¹²⁵</p>

¹²¹ See e.g.: <http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/jon-a-norveg-magyar-visszavago-a-civil-penzekert-102628>.

¹²² According to Act CXXXI of 2010 on Social Participation in Preparing Laws, public consultation shall take place regarding draft Bills (and decrees) prepared by the Ministers, i.e. ministerial and Government Bills, thus MPs', parliamentary committees' and the President's Bills are not covered. Public consultation happens before a Bill is submitted to the Parliament. The "general" consultation shall always include publishing the draft Bills on the web, allowing for the submission of any opinion via e-mail. According to the legislative agenda of the Parliament for spring 2017, the respective law on NGOs was foreseen to be prepared by the Minister of Human Resources.

¹²³ The Human Rights Roundtable, operating with the participation of NGOs, was set up in late 2012 by the Government, as a response to the recommendations formed in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review of Hungary. The experiences of NGOs in terms of the practical operation of the thematic working groups operating under the Human Rights Roundtable were mixed. In the autumn of 2014, several NGOs, including the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the HCLU, left the Human Rights Roundtable, as a protest against governmental attacks against NGOs, in particular a police raid of the offices of Ökotárs and DemNet on 8 September 2014.

¹²⁴ The legislative agenda is available here:

http://www.parlament.hu/documents/10181/56621/Tvalk_program_2017_tavas.pdf/77d69862-7613-4fe1-a490-d15975f5e81f (see item 37.).

¹²⁵ The HCLU's original letter, the responses of the Ministries and the counter-responses of the HCLU are available here in Hungarian: <https://tasz.hu/jogallam-vedelme/tasz-nyilvanos-egyeztetesre-keri-trocsanyi-es-balog-minisztereket>.

<p><i>5 March 2017</i></p> <p>Secretary of State responsible for relationships with civil society refuses to meet HCLU</p>	<p>On 5 March 2017, Miklós Soltész, the Ministry of Human Resources' Secretary of State responsible for relationships with churches, nationalities (i.e. national and ethnic minorities) and the civil society said the following at a press conference, referring to the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU) asking for public consultation (see above): "I have my opinion about HCLU and the organisations [linked to] George Soros, and it is rather devastating. Interestingly, when Transylvanian Hungarians [were] in trouble, for example in Marosvásárhely, the HCLU and similar organisations did not dare to stand beside them and have never stood beside them, while in their own case they dare to be unlimitedly brave. Hence, as for my part, it is sure that I will not meet them."</p> <p>→ The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) sent a letter to the Secretary of State on 21 March 2017 as a reaction to his statement, pointing out for example that the HHC provided legal aid to hundreds of Hungarians who fled from the former Yugoslavia at the time of the Yugoslav Wars, and that the HHC's mandate covers rights violations committed by the Hungarian state.¹²⁶</p>
<p><i>10 March 2017</i></p> <p>Government spokesperson on new asylum rules and NGOs</p>	<p>Government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács stated in a radio interview on 10 March 2017 in relation to the criticism voiced by human rights defenders (both domestically and abroad) in relation to an amendment further tightening Hungarian asylum laws (foreseeing the automatic detention of all asylum-seekers in border transit zones) that the "choreography" seen multiple times in the past years returns: "rights defender organisations, so to say", financed from abroad, criticize the Hungarian government unfoundedly, and members of the Brussels bureaucracy and the left-wing and liberal parties there react to that criticism "accordingly".¹²⁷</p>
<p><i>14 March 2017</i></p> <p>Vice President of Fidesz: national security sources show that EKINT receives more money from Soros than it admits</p>	<p>Szilárd Németh, the Vice President of the Fidesz said in an interview published on 14 March 2017 that Transparency International Hungary, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee are not civil organisations, and even though "they make statements in relation to governmental issues", they "do not take responsibility. They do not have any kind of political legitimacy, and they serve foreign interests from foreign money." He also stated that these organisations "want to influence governmental issues on the basis of foreign interests, and what's more, they are busy trying to bring down the democratically elected national government. [...] They do not express an opinion: a network has been built with a scientific-looking background and with media, which represents the interests of the Soros-like international tycoons." Szilárd Németh added that at the moment when it will be transparent from whom and for what these organisations receive their money, it will not be worth supporting them. He went on saying that the Eötvös Károly Institute receives more money from George Soros than it admits in its public financial reports, claiming that he bases this assumption on what he heard in the Parliament's National Security Committee from the national security services, making it clear for those present that "there is much, much bigger dough in the background".¹²⁸</p>
<p><i>23 March 2017</i></p> <p>Government</p>	<p>Government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács stated on 23 March 2017 in a television program that the civil society as a whole is not problematic, but only those organisations which form an international network and are financed from the outside. He added that there are over 62</p>

¹²⁶ See: <http://www.helsinki.hu/a-helsinki-bizottsag-valasza-soltesz-allamtitkarnak/>.

¹²⁷ See e.g.: <https://mno.hu/belfold/kovacs-zoltan-kulfoldrol-penzelik-a-hatarzar-miatt-tiltakozokat-1389588>.

¹²⁸ See: http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20170313_nemeth_szilard_kezdtok_tolem_tartani_interju.

spokesperson on NGOs funded from abroad	<p>thousand NGOs in Hungary which do not deal with “migrant business” or defend rights in a way inciting for the violation of international law and a country’s sovereignty. The spokesperson went on saying that problematic NGOs shall make their operation fully transparent, since in certain cases they carry out a policy totally contradicting the interests of a Member State of the European Union or the European Union as a whole.¹²⁹</p>
<p>24 March 2017</p> <p>Fidesz representative talks about “migrant business” after HHC wins case before the ECtHR</p>	<p>On 14 March 2017, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in the case <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i>¹³⁰ that Hungary violated the rights of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee’s (HHC) asylum-seeker clients with respect to their detention in the so-called transit zone on the Hungarian-Serbian border, as well as their removal from Hungary to Serbia. On 24 March 2017, Lajos Kósa, head of the Fidesz parliamentary group criticized the ruling in a radio interview, said that the HHC’s arguments presented in the case were “mendacious”, and expressed his view that the HHC “had seen an opportunity here to gain [money] to the detriment of the Hungarian state”, referring to the legal fees awarded to the HHC in the case. He stated that if “we look at migration figures, this is a market of 40-50 billion HUF”, so that much could be “ripped off” the Hungarian state if these “agent organisations” join with the Strasbourg court. He added that “it seems that the migrant business has started” also at the HHC.¹³¹</p>
<p>27 March 2017</p> <p>Fidesz initiates five-party discussion on the planned Bill on NGOs</p>	<p>János Halász, the spokesperson for the Fidesz parliamentary group announced on 27 March 2017 in the Parliament that the Fidesz parliamentary group is initiating a discussion with the participation of the five parties in the Parliament about the planned Bill to be submitted by the Fidesz parliamentary group, aimed at ensuring the transparency of organisations funded from abroad. He stated that these organisations are unjust, and do not represent the interests of the Hungarian people, but that of migrants, and that these Soros-organisation make a lot of money on the “migrant business”. The spokesperson also added the following: “we not only have to take more severe measures to stop immigration, but we also have to step up against the foreign agent organisations operating with funds received from Soros. These [organisations], besides intending to influence the Hungarian public life, would, in addition, also make 10 billions [of HUF] on the migrant business. That is why it is important in the case of the agent organisations receiving funds from abroad to ensure transparency.”¹³²</p>
<p>28 March 2017</p> <p>Ministry attacks HHC over ECtHR’s interim</p>	<p>On 27 March 2017, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) granted the Hungarian Helsinki Committee’s (HHC) request to indicate interim measures¹³³ in the case of the HHC’s asylum-seeking clients, eight unaccompanied children and a traumatised woman with advanced and high-risk pregnancy, and stalled their transfer from open reception facilities to the transit zone on the Hungarian-Serbian border.¹³⁴ On 28 March 2017, the Ministry of</p>

¹²⁹ See e.g.: <http://www.hirado.hu/2017/03/23/kovacs-zoltan-nem-a-teljes-civil-tarsadalommal-van-gond/>.

¹³⁰ Application no. 47287/15, Judgment of 14 March 2017. The judgment is available here in English: <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-172091>.

¹³¹ See e.g.: <http://www.fidesz.hu/hirek/2017-03-24/beindult-a-migransbiznisz-a-magyar-helsinki-bizottsag-is/>.

¹³² See e.g.: <http://www.hirado.hu/2017/03/27/otpartit-kezdemenez-a-fidesz/>.

¹³³ The ECtHR may, under Rule 39 of its Rules of Court, indicate interim measures to any State party to the European Convention on Human Rights. Interim measures are urgent measures which, according to the ECtHR’s well-established practice, apply only where there is an imminent risk of irreparable harm. (For further information, see e.g.: http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Interim_measures_ENG.pdf.)

¹³⁴ See: <http://www.helsinki.hu/a-strasbourg-birosag-leallitotta-nyolc-gyerek-es-egy-terhes-no-atszallitasat-a-tranzitzonaba/>. The transfer of the applicants would have been taken place due to the entering into force of the law setting out the automatic detention of all asylum-

<p>measures in the case of vulnerable asylum-seekers</p>	<p>Interior issued a statement attacking the HHC over the interim measures, claiming that “the latest overzealous action by the [HHC] is clearly an unprincipled attempt to attack the reinforced legal border barrier” (i.e. the amendments entering into force on 28 March 2017, foreseeing the automatic detention of all asylum-seekers in border transit zones), and claimed that the HHC used “faulty legal reasoning” in its submissions.¹³⁵</p> <p>→ The HHC published a detailed response to the Ministry of Interior’s statement on 29 March 2017.¹³⁶</p>
<p><i>30 March 2017</i></p> <p>Government representatives criticize ECtHR judgments and the HHC’s role in them</p>	<p>On 30 March 2017, at the weekly government press conference “Government Info”, János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister’s Office stated that the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) is a pressure tool, which intends to make Hungary give up the protection of its borders and to let immigrants in. The ECtHR has found one partner in that so far: the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC), which became a political organisation and carries out openly political work. The Minister went on saying that the HHC explicitly “hunts down” applicants, which is regrettable, and added that he “hopes that this is not about business”. The Minister also suggested the HHC that it should offer the just satisfaction awarded in the HHC’s <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i> case to the Hungarian Interchurch Aid. At the same press conference, government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács addressed the interim measures indicated by the ECtHR on 27 March 2017 in the case of the HHC’s nine clients (see above),¹³⁷ and said that if a ruling may be issued in Strasbourg upon the initiative of the HHC within one day, that shows well “what is going on there”.¹³⁸</p>
<p><i>31 March 2017</i></p> <p>PM talks about “migrant business” in relation to ECtHR judgment</p>	<p>On 31 March 2017, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán also addressed the judgment reached by the European Court of Human Rights in the Hungarian Helsinki Committee’s <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i> case, and said the following: “I must say that in my view this situation is morally untenable. These NGOs, or non-governmental organisations as they call themselves, aren’t civil society organisations. They have nothing to do with civil society organisations, of which there are thousands in Hungary. To be frank I feel very strongly about the behaviour of these international networks. [...] As regards money, the cat’s out of the bag, because it’s emerged that these international networks are rather keen on money. So there’s also a well-established migrant business in operation [...]” The Prime Minister added that in his view the procedure before the European Court of Human Rights in the case concerned was “unnecessary”, and the lawyers representing the applicants initiated an unnecessary procedure for which they receive payment.¹³⁹</p>
<p><i>31 March 2017</i></p> <p>Fidesz calls upon the Government</p>	<p>On 31 March 2017, the Fidesz parliamentary group announced that it calls upon the Government to deny paying the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) the just satisfaction awarded in the HHC’s <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i> case. János Halász, the spokesperson of the</p>

seekers in border transit zones. For more information on the latter, see: <http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Info-Update-rule39.pdf>.

¹³⁵ The full text of the Ministry of Interior’s statement is available here in English: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-interior/news/the-helsinki-committee-is-attacking-the-reinforced-legal-border-barrier>.

¹³⁶ The HHC’s response is available here: <http://www.helsinki.hu/valaszaink-a-belugyminiszterium-vadaskodasaira/>.

¹³⁷ See: <http://www.helsinki.hu/a-strasbourgi-birosag-leallitotta-nyolc-gyerek-es-egy-terhes-no-atszallitast-a-tranzitzonaba/>.

¹³⁸ See e.g.: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170330_Kormanyinfo_CEUtol_Orbanig_percrol_percre, <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/video/kormanyinfo-83-komoly-nyomasgyakorlasra-szomit-a-kormany>.

¹³⁹ The full interview is available here in English: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-kossuth-radios-programme-180-minutes/>.

<p>to deny paying the just satisfaction awarded by the ECtHR to the HHC</p>	<p>Fidesz parliamentary group said that “Soros should pay, he has enough money”, and added that the “migrant business” shall not be financed from the money of the Hungarian people. The spokesperson stated that the judgment in the above case showed unequivocally that the “international migrant business exists”, and “Soros-organisations are involved in it up until their necks”. He called it outrageous that after human smugglers also Soros-organisations “would like to make money on immigration”. The spokesperson suggested that “migrant business” is not over with the judgment above, and if NGOs would “attack” Hungary in every similar case, that would result in a “nice sum” for the Soros-organisation (i.e. the HHC).¹⁴⁰</p>
<p><i>28 March – 4 April 2017</i></p> <p>A law making the operation of CEU impossible in Budapest is adopted</p>	<p>On 28 March 2017, a Bill was submitted to the Parliament, aimed at amending Act CCIV of 2011 on the National Higher Education. The Bill, amending the rules of operation for universities accredited abroad, targeted one institution, namely the Central European University (CEU), funded by George Soros in 1991, making it impossible for the CEU to continue its operations as an institution of higher education in Budapest. Despite the CEU’s protest against the discriminatory amendment and statements supporting CEU pouring in from Nobel laureates, scholars, universities in Hungary and abroad, the U.S. Department of State, etc.,¹⁴¹ the Bill¹⁴² was adopted by the Parliament within one week, on 4 April 2017.¹⁴³</p>
<p><i>1 April 2017</i></p> <p>National consultation containing questions on NGOs is launched</p>	<p>On 1 April 2017, the Government reported that the national consultation¹⁴⁴ (titled “Let’s stop Brussels” announced by the Prime Minister in his speech opening the Parliament’s spring session in February 2017 was launched.¹⁴⁵ Questions related to NGOs go as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 3: “By now it has become clear that, in addition to the smugglers, certain international organisations encourage the illegal immigrants to commit illegal acts. What do you think Hungary should do?” – Possible answers: “(a) Activities assisting illegal immigration such as human smuggling and the popularization of illegal immigration must be punished. (b) Let us accept that there are international organisations which, without any consequences, urge the circumvention of Hungarian laws.” • Question 4: “More and more foreign-supported organisations operate in Hungary with the aim of interfering in the internal affairs of our country in an opaque manner. These organisations could jeopardize our independence. What do you think Hungary should do?” – Possible answers: “(a) Require them to register, revealing on which country’s or

¹⁴⁰ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/03/31/a-fidesz-felszolitotta-a-kormanyt-hogy-ne-fizessek-ki-a-helsinki-bizottsagnak-amit-az-europai-birosag-megitelt-a-szamukra>.

¹⁴¹ For the list of supporting organisations, see: <https://www.ceu.edu/istandwithCEU/support-statements>.

¹⁴² The adopted text of the Bill is available here in Hungarian: <http://www.parlament.hu/irom40/14686/14686-0014.pdf>.

¹⁴³ A timeline of the events related to “Lex CEU” is available here in English: <https://www.ceu.edu/istandwithceu/timeline-events>, while a summary of the legislative changes and their impact is available here in English:

https://www.ceu.edu/sites/default/files/attachment/basic_page/18010/summaryoflegislativechangesandimpact7.4.17.pdf. At the time of publishing the present timeline, the adopted Bill is pending before the President of Hungary.

¹⁴⁴ Note: a „national consultation” is a method introduced by Fidesz, it is not equal to a referendum or a popular initiative, there is no participation requirement attached to it, and its result is not binding for the Government. In the framework of a national consultation, the Government sends out questionnaires with pre-formulated answers to citizens. The current national consultation questionnaire may be submitted via mail or electronically: <https://nemzetikonzultacio.kormany.hu/>.

¹⁴⁵ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnoki-kabinetiroda/kormanyzati-kommunikacioert-felelos-allamtitkar/hirek/elindult-a-nemzeti-konzultacio>.

	organisation's authority they act and the objectives of their activities. (b) Allow them to continue their risky activities without any supervision." ¹⁴⁶
2 April 2017 Text of the envisaged Bill on NGOs is leaked	On 2 April 2017, the text of the envisaged Bill on NGOs, i.e. the Bill on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds was leaked to the press, ¹⁴⁷ foreseeing, among others, that organisations receiving foreign funds will have to register themselves, and will have to label themselves as such on their website and in their publications.
5 April 2017 Fidesz: "Hungary has to defend itself from the attacks of Soros-organisations"	→ On 5 April 2017, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee's (HHC) co-chair published an article on index.hu, ¹⁴⁸ refuting the statements and insinuations made by the Fidesz and government representatives in relation to the European Court of Human Rights' judgment of 14 March 2017 in the HHC's case <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i> and the interim measure indicated on 27 March 2017 in relation to nine further asylum-seekers (see above). As a reaction, the Fidesz issued the following statement on the same day, with the title "Hungary has to defend itself from the attacks of Soros-organisations": "Soros-organisations have been attacking the Hungarian government's measures for the past two years. Their aim is to destroy border protection and enforce the free access of immigrants. They are openly inciting for the violation of the Hungarian laws. Hungary must protect itself. The first step in this regard is transparency. All Hungarian people have to know who the men of George Soros are, and what funds and what interests stand behind the organisations funded from abroad." ¹⁴⁹
5 April 2017 Fidesz representative claims that the Bill on NGOs only aims at ensuring transparency	At a press conference held on 5 April 2017, after the five parliamentary parties discussed the envisaged Bill on NGOs, Gergely Gulyás, Vice President of the Fidesz stated that the Bill's only aim is to ensure transparency regarding the funding received by NGOs from abroad, and to get to know which NGOs receive funds from abroad, and who supports them. He added that NGOs have no right to conceal the real amount of funds they receive. As for the motive of the Bill, he explained that in the course of the "migration crisis", the organisations supported by George Soros attacked the Hungarian government harsher than ever before, their aim being to disrupt the system of the Hungarian border protection and enforce the free access of immigrants to Hungary, in many cases implicitly encouraging people to break the Hungarian rules. Gulyás Gergely added that since transparency is one of the main consideration of these NGOs, Fidesz hopes that they will also support the Bill. ¹⁵⁰
6 April 2017 Minister accuses HHC of inciting against	Responding to a journalist's question as to which "international organisations encouraging the illegal immigrants to commit illegal acts" Question 3. of the latest national consultation ¹⁵¹ refers to, János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister's Office submitted at the regular government press conference "Government Info" on 6 April 2017 that in his view what is currently happening in the vicinity of the transit zone at the Hungarian-Serbian border is that

¹⁴⁶ See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2017/03/31/igy_nez_ki_a_legujabb_nemzeti_konzultacio/,

<http://hungarianspectrum.org/2017/04/02/national-consultation-2017-lets-stop-brussels/>

¹⁴⁷ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/04/02/itt-van-a-kormany-civil-torvenyenek-szovege>,

<http://budapestbeacon.com/civil-society/foreign-funded-ngos-must-register-authorities-according-leaked-bill/45483>.

¹⁴⁸ See: http://index.hu/velemenylolvir/2017/04/05/ha_nem_megy_szep_szoval_perelunk/.

¹⁴⁹ See: http://os.mti.hu/hirek/125736/a_fidesz_kozlemenye.

¹⁵⁰ See: <http://www.fidesz.hu/hirek/2017-04-05/szeretnenk-tisztan-latni-a-kulfoldrol-tamogatott-civil-szervezetek-ugyeben/>.

¹⁵¹ The full question goes as follows: "By now it has become clear that, in addition to the smugglers, certain international organisations encourage the illegal immigrants to commit illegal acts. What do you think Hungary should do?"

Hungarian laws	the Hungarian Helsinki Committee “calls upon those waiting in the transit zone to step up against the Hungarian laws”. When the Minister was asked whether they filed a criminal report about this, he said no, and explained that this happens on Serbian territory and in his view, no criminal sanction may be applied in relation to it, but “it harms the state, harms Hungary”. ¹⁵²
<p>7 April 2017</p> <p>Bill prescribing registration for “organisations receiving foreign funds” is submitted to the Parliament</p>	<p>On 7 April 2017, three MPs of the Fidesz (Gergely Gulyás, the president of the Parliament’s Committee on Legislation and Vice President of the Fidesz; Lajos Kósa, head of the Fidesz parliamentary group; and Szilárd Németh, Vice President of the Fidesz) submitted Bill T/14967 on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds¹⁵³ to the Parliament (hereafter: “NGO Bill”). (Since the Bill was submitted to the Parliament by MPs, no public consultation had to take place before its submission.¹⁵⁴) According to the Bill (being almost entirely identical with the text leaked to the press on 2 April 2017) Hungarian NGOs (but not religious or sports organisations) that receive more than 7.2 million HUF (app. 23,000 EUR) from foreign sources per year are required to register with authorities and represent themselves to the public as “organisations receiving foreign funds”. The Bill sets out the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • associations and foundations shall register with the court within 15 days of meeting the annual threshold, and shall report the funds received yearly after that, listing each relevant transaction; • the fact that an NGO qualifies as an organisation receiving foreign funds shall be made public on the government-operated Civil Information Portal; • the organisations shall indicate on their website and on their various publications that they qualify as organisations receiving foreign funds; • organisations failing to comply with the rules shall be called upon to do so by the prosecution, then shall be fined, and if they still fail to comply with their obligations under the Bill, they shall be abolished; • organisations can only be de-listed as organisations receiving foreign funds after three consecutive years of receiving less than 7.2 million HUF from foreign sources annually.
<p>9 April 2017</p> <p>MP alleging ECtHR being under the influence of George Soros</p>	<p>On 9 April 2017, István Hollik, an MP of the Christian Democratic People’s Party stated at a press conference that the Hungarian judge at the European Court of Human Rights, András Sajó is “the man of” George Soros, since he is at the same time the founding dean of the Central European University, founded by George Soros. He also stated (incorrectly) that András Sajó is the honorary president of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the NGO which represented the applicants in the <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i> case, and made the allegation that this is how the “migrant business” is set up: organisations that may be linked to Soros sue Hungary before a court where the people of Soros sit.¹⁵⁵</p>

¹⁵² See e.g.: <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20170406-cloben-kozvetitjuk-lazar-kormanyinfojat>.

¹⁵³ The Bill is available here in Hungarian: <http://www.parlament.hu/irom40/14967/14967.pdf>, and is available here in English (unofficial translation): http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/14967_NGO_bill_20170407_with_reasoning.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ According to Act CXXXI of 2010 on Social Participation in Preparing Laws, public consultation shall take place regarding draft Bills (and decrees) prepared by the Ministers, i.e. ministerial and Government Bills, thus MPs’, parliamentary committees’ and the President’s Bills are not covered.

¹⁵⁵ For the press conference, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAAdNyktM23I>.

<p>9–10 April 2017</p> <p>MPs link the issue of the CEU, NGOs, migration and Soros</p>	<p>As a reaction to a large-scale demonstration against the law targeting the Central European University, MP Németh Szilárd (Vice President of the Fidesz) stated that the protest was “schemed” by the “agent organisations” funded and instructed by George Soros, due to the submission of the NGO Bill.¹⁵⁶ The next day, Lajos Kósa, head of the Fidesz parliamentary group said in the Parliament that the protest was fuelled by the fact that if the attempts of the Hungarian government related to migration succeed, that would hurt the “migration business”, while a Christian Democrat MP talked about the “triumvirate” of Brussels, Soros and the Strasbourg court, who want to make money through the “migrant business”.¹⁵⁷</p>
<p>12 April 2017</p> <p>EC College of Commissioners debate about Hungary</p>	<p>On 12 April 2017, European Commission’s First Vice-President Frans Timmermans led a debate in the College of Commissioners on recent developments in Hungary which have widely raised concerns about compatibility with EU law and the common values on which the EU is based, including the amendment of the National Higher Education Act, the draft law concerning foreign funding of NGOs, the “Let’s stop Brussels” national consultation, and ongoing legal concerns in the fields of asylum and non-discrimination. On the draft law on NGO funding, it was decided that the EC will closely monitor the process and will revert to the matter on the basis of an analysis of the legal issues at stake.¹⁵⁸</p>
<p>12 April 2017</p> <p>MP: violation claimed by NGOs is exaggerated and illusory</p>	<p>On 12 April 2017, Fidesz representative Gergely Gulyás stated at a press conference that the NGO Bill is not about stigmatizing, but about transparency; that the violation claimed by NGOs as caused by the envisaged registration requirement is “exaggerated and illusory”; and added that they experienced in the past two years that certain NGOs do everything to hinder the Government in fulfilling its tasks with regard to border protection, and most of these NGOs are supported from beyond the EU, mostly by George Soros.¹⁵⁹</p>
<p>12 April 2017</p> <p>Thousands protest against NGO Bill</p>	<p>→ On 12 April 2017, thousands gathered at the Heroes Square of Budapest to protest against the NGO Bill and the law targeting the Central European University in the framework of a demonstration organised by NGO campaign network Civilizáció, which was launched in January 2017 against the harassment of independent civil society organisations.¹⁶⁰</p>
<p>15 April 2017</p> <p>PM on the NGO Bill and George Soros</p>	<p>In an interview published in the government-friendly newspaper <i>Magyar Idők</i>, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the following in relation to the NGO Bill: “I do not believe that the civic intelligentsia would be happy to be allied with people whom the impending legislation will clearly show to be operating with foreign funding, serving foreign interests, and following instructions from abroad. All this is about the fact that – through his organisations in Hungary, and hidden from the public gaze – George Soros is spending endless amounts of money to support illegal immigration. To pursue his interests he pays a number of lobbying organisations operating in the guise of civil society. He maintains a regular network, with its own promoters, its own media, hundreds of people, and its own university.”¹⁶¹</p>

¹⁵⁶ See e.g.: <http://m.magyararancs.hu/belpol/breking-a-fidesz-bevetette-a-csodafegyveret-rezsi-szilardot-is-103435>.

¹⁵⁷ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/04/10/kosa-szerint-nem-a-tanszabadsagert-tuntettek-tegnap-80-ezren-hanem-azert-hogy-tamogassak-soros-menekultbizniszet>.

¹⁵⁸ For the remarks of First Vice-President Frans Timmermans after the College of Commissioners discussion on legal issues relating to Hungary in English, see: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-966_en.htm.

¹⁵⁹ See e.g.: <http://index.hu/belfold/2017/04/12/gulyas-soros-tamogatott-szervezetek-is-tiltakoznak-a-soros-ellenes-torveny-ellen/>

¹⁶⁰ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/04/12/ezrek-tuntetnek-a-ceu-es-a-a-civilek-mellett-a-hosok-teren>.

¹⁶¹ The full text of the interview is available here in English: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/easter-interview-with-prime-minister-viktor-orban-in-hungarian-daily-magyar-idok/>.

<p>19 April 2017</p> <p>Data Protection Authority: NGO Law should apply also to NGOs supported by the Government</p>	<p>After reviewing the NGO Bill, the Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (the authority which replaced the former Data Protection Commissioner in breach of EU law¹⁶²) stated in its opinion that the Bill may indeed be a “useful and appropriate tool” to ensure that NGOs are not used in the “influencing attempts” of “foreign interest groups”. The authority added however that it may be raised that information on NGO funding by economical actors, by the Government and by political parties could also be made public; and raised that religious organisations, which are not covered by the Bill, may also be used to manipulate public opinion in a covert way.¹⁶³</p>
<p>19 April 2017</p> <p>MPs insist that NGO Bill is only about transparency</p>	<p>Fidesz representatives continued to insist that the NGO Bill is only about transparency, even though in fact the Bill did not enhance the already existing transparency of NGOs. The standpoint of the governing party was reiterated at a press conference by Lajos Kósa, head of the Fidesz parliamentary group, on 19 April 2017.¹⁶⁴ On the same day, Gergely Gulyás, one of the MPs submitting the Bill and Vice President of the Fidesz also stated at the beginning of the parliamentary debate of the Bill that the NGO Bill is only about transparency and does not bring along any kind of stigmatisation.¹⁶⁵</p>
<p>20 April 2017</p> <p>Government representative: only NGOs “supporting migration” oppose the NGO Bill</p>	<p>On 20 April 2017, Pál Völner, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Justice said that the NGO Bill is criticized only by NGOs which do not keep the country’s interests in mind, and added that the Bill is criticized by those foreign funded organisations which oppose the Government’s standpoint regarding the “migrant issue”. He added that migration seems to be “very profitable” also for human rights defenders besides human smugglers, which organisations receive funding for their activities supporting migration from abroad and have an interest in the issue also through “pocketing” compensation and procedural fees in related procedures.¹⁶⁶</p>
<p>20 April 2017</p> <p>NGOs: the Bill should be withdrawn</p>	<p>→ In April 2017, the Ministry of Justice invited some NGOs to discuss the NGO Bill. However, the parliamentary debate over the Bill commenced already a day before the meeting, showing the meeting’s pointlessness. Five invited NGOs (Amnesty International, Háttér Foundation, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and Transparency International Hungary) stated at a press conference after the meeting that their standpoint remains the same: the Bill is not suitable for discussion, and it should be withdrawn.¹⁶⁷</p>

¹⁶² For the judgment of the European Court of Justice in Case C-288/12, see:

<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=150641&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=507667>.

¹⁶³ The opinion of the Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information is available here:

<http://naih.hu/files/NAIH-2311-2-2017-J-170419.pdf>. See also e.g.:

http://index.hu/belfold/2017/04/19/adatvedelmi_hatosag_a_kormany_atal_tamogatott_civilekre_is_vonatkozzon_a_torveny/.

¹⁶⁴ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/04/19/kosa-a-civileket-ekezo-sajtotajekoztatojan-osszevissza-kamuzott-a-norveg-alaprol-es-miutan-jeleztuk-hogy-nem-mond-igazat-mar-nem-is-engedett-kerdezni>.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/04/19/a-civiltorvenyt-benyujto-gulyas-gergely-a-parlamenti-vitan-hazudozott-egy-kicsit-az-atlathatosag-fontossagarol-majd-a-felenel-egyszeruen-lelepett>.

¹⁶⁶ See e.g.: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/igazsagugyi-miniszterium/parlamenti-allamtitkarsag/hirek/majus-20-ig-az-emberek-megerosithetik-a-kormany-allaspontjat>.

¹⁶⁷ See e.g.: <http://www.helsinki.hu/civiltorveny-nincs-mirol-egyeztetni/>.

<p>23 April 2017</p> <p>Fidesz spokesperson falsely claims that NGOs rejected to respond to an FOI request</p>	<p>On 23 April 2017, János Halász, the spokesperson of the governing party's parliamentary faction said at a press conference that certain "Soros-organisations" (the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Transparency International Hungary) rejected to respond to the FOI request of the government-friendly paper <i>Magyar Hírlap</i> in a "coordinated manner", and are secretive with regard to their "assets, and the people and agents financed by them, and while they demand transparency from others, they do not want to make their own operations transparent at all". According to the spokesperson, this raises "questions of national sovereignty and national security".¹⁶⁸ The press conference was held before the deadline for responding to the FOI request was over.</p> <p>→ In September 2017, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee launched a lawsuit against the Fidesz and its spokesperson due to the violation of the organisation's right to a good reputation, given that they had not rejected to respond to the journalist's FOI request, and provided an answer in time (after the date of the press conference) and in full.¹⁶⁹</p> <p>→ The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union reported in September 2017 that after they responded to the FOI request (and in spite of the fact that their detailed financial report is available on their website), they were sued by the journalist to provide further data which in the NGOs view did not qualify as public interest data.¹⁷⁰ In October 2017, the court ruled in favour of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union.¹⁷¹</p>
<p>25 April 2017</p> <p>Civil society protest in the Parliament</p>	<p>→ Two dozen civil society representatives showed up at the session of the Parliament's Committee on Justice, held on 25 April 2017, when it started its discussion on the NGO Bill. Protesters held up signs and remained silent, but nevertheless, the chair of the committee suspended the session and summoned the Parliamentary Guard, who arrived but did not remove the protesters as originally requested by the chair. The chair claimed that the protesters "foully broke into the committee's session".¹⁷²</p>
<p>26 April 2017</p> <p>PM in the EP: NGO Bill aims only at transparency</p>	<p>In his speech given in the European Parliament on 26 April 2017, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán claimed the following, giving the false impression that transparency of NGOs is not ensured in Hungary: "We want nothing else but to be able to know of NGOs what kind of money and what kind of interests are behind them. This does not undermine their constitutional rights to have their voices heard, represent their interests and be able to organize themselves freely."¹⁷³</p>
<p>28 April 2017</p> <p>Minister on differences between registering and reporting</p>	<p>János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister's Office claimed on 28 April 2017 at the weekly "Government Info" press conference that mandatory registration of NGOs as required by the NGO Bill will be entirely different than submitting a respective report to the National Judicial Office under the current rules, claiming that submitting the data was voluntary before. (Under the law in force, NGOs have to submit annual reports, which also contain information on funds received e.g. from other states, international organisations and other non-governmental organisations, the reports being published on the National Judicial</p>

¹⁶⁸ See e.g.: http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/85981/Halasz_Janos_A_Sorosszervezetek_titkoloznak_vagyonukrol_es_ugynokeikrol#.

¹⁶⁹ See: <http://www.helsinki.hu/a-helsinki-bizottsag-kenytelen-harmadszor-is-beperelni-a-fideszt/>.

¹⁷⁰ See: <https://tasz.hu/magunkrol/abszurd-indok-miatt-perli-magyar-hirlap-szerzoje-tasz>.

¹⁷¹ See: <https://tasz.hu/hirek/nyertunk-magyar-hirlap-munkatarsa-ellen-atlathatoak-vagyunk-es-jol-tajekoztattuk-az-uisagirot>.

¹⁷² See e.g.: http://index.hu/belfold/2017/04/25/civiltorveny_vitaja_az_igazsagugyi_bizottsagban/

¹⁷³ The full text of the Prime Minister's speech is available here in English: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-in-the-european-parliament/>.

	Office's website. Earlier, in September 2016, a Fidesz MP referred to these reports when arguing against a similar proposal of the far-right Jobbik party, claiming that there is no need for registering foreign funded NGOs separately. ¹⁷⁴
28 April 2017 PM speaks about a "well-constructed system" linked to George Soros	In a radio interview given on 28 April 2017, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán submitted the following, referring to the case <i>Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary</i> : "What happened in the case of the Bangladeshis was that an organisation funded by Soros sued Hungary for not following the correct procedure in relation to these two Bangladeshi men – who have since disappeared. [...] In those proceedings expert opinion was supplied by another Soros organisation, and in the court a group of judges delivered a ruling under the supervision of a judge who teaches at a Soros university. Clearly we have been encircled. Here there is a well-constructed system, resulting in a ruling that we Hungarians should pay the legal costs – in other words give money to Soros-organisations – and also pay thousands of euros to the Bangladeshis, who in the meantime have disappeared. If things continue like this, tens of thousands will scalp us: they will keep dipping into our pockets in an attempt to make off with the Hungarian people's money. [...] Behind these we have revealed that in fact one can see a networked operation at work. One of the reasons we want to enact a separate law on so-called »NGOs« engaged in activities such as these is because we want to see them, we want to learn about them and we want to find out who funds them. Otherwise we won't be able to protect Hungary against them." ¹⁷⁵
April 2017 TV ad targeting NGO	As part of the "Let's stop Brussels!" campaign, the Government launched a television advertisement in April 2017 that specifically targeted the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, saying that "an organisation financed by George Soros is launching lawsuits against our homeland in support of Brussels". ¹⁷⁶
12 May 2017 MP on attack possibly staged by Soros	In a television interview touching upon an incident in which a passer-by shouted "dirty migrant" at someone for approaching him in English and attacked an intervening third person, MP Szilárd Németh, Vice-President of the Fidesz voiced the opinion that the incident could have been staged: "After George Soros setting foot in here, and moving provocateurs practically via a joystick, either considering the media or the organisations he finances, they do what he says." ¹⁷⁷
April–May 2017 International objection against the NGO Bill by the CoE, the UN and the EP	In April and May 2017, several international stakeholders raised objections against and voiced concerns regarding the Bill on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds: → Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights called on Hungary's Parliament to reject the NGO Bill on 26 April 2017. ¹⁷⁸ → The Council of Europe Expert Council on NGO Law noted in its April 2017 opinion that "the draft Act gives rise to concerns with respect to its compatibility with the [European

¹⁷⁴ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/04/28/lazar-janos-a-civil-torvenyrol-nem-tudjuk-milyen-hatasas-lesz-jogot-alapitunk>.

¹⁷⁵ The full text of the interview if available here in English: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-kossuth-radios-180-minutes-programme-6/>.

¹⁷⁶ The advertisement is available here with English subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zp0vOc9MwY>.

¹⁷⁷ See: <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20170512-fidesz-alelnok-barmi-elkepzelheto-azota-hogy-soros-gyorgy-betette-ide-a-labat>.

¹⁷⁸ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-calls-on-hungary-s-national-assembly-to-reject-law-on-foreign-funded-ngos>.

	<p>Convention on Human Rights] and other recognized international standards”.¹⁷⁹</p> <p>→ UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders and on the promotion and protection the right to freedom of opinion and expression urged Hungary to withdraw the NGO Bill on 15 May 2017 by stating that the law “would severely curtail the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association in Hungary”,¹⁸⁰ and, together with the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, addressed the Hungarian Government regarding the issue.¹⁸¹</p> <p>→ The European Parliament condemned the NGO Bill in a resolution on 17 May 2017 by stating that “the most recent developments in Hungary, [...] the proposed Act on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Support from Abroad [...] have given rise to concerns regarding their compatibility with EU law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights”.¹⁸²</p> <p>→ The Venice Commission published its preliminary opinion on the NGO Bill on 2 June 2017, criticising the lack of public consultation regarding the Bill, and suggested that several parts of the Bill (such as those concerning arbitrary deadlines and excessive reporting obligations) should be amended or deleted.¹⁸³</p> <p>→ Well-known civil society organisations also urged the Hungarian government not to adopt the NGO Bill: the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum,¹⁸⁴ Civil Society Europe,¹⁸⁵ Front Line Defenders,¹⁸⁶ Open Society Foundations,¹⁸⁷ the International Federation for Human Rights, the European Association for the Defence of Human Rights, Amnesty International, Reporters without Borders and Human Rights Watch¹⁸⁸ all raised concerns.</p>
<p><i>13 June 2017</i></p> <p>Lex NGO adopted by the Parliament</p>	<p>The NGO Bill was finally adopted as Act LXXVI of 2017 on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds¹⁸⁹ (hereafter: “Lex NGO” or “NGO Law”) on 13 June 2017 by the governing majority of the Hungarian Parliament, despite repeated domestic and international objections. As foreseen by the text of the Bill, the adopted law obliges associations and foundations that receive at least 7.2 million HUF (app 23,000 EUR) annually from foreign source to register with the court as an organisation receiving foreign funds, to annually report about their foreign funding, and to indicate the label “organisation receiving foreign funds” on their website and publications. The list of foreign funded NGOs is also published on a government website, and the law foresees sanctions for non-</p>

¹⁷⁹ See: <https://rm.coe.int/168070bfbb>.

¹⁸⁰ See: <http://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21617&LangID=E>.

¹⁸¹ See: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/Legislation/OL-HUN-2-2017.pdf>.

¹⁸² See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0216+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹⁸³ See: [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI\(2017\)002-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI(2017)002-e).

¹⁸⁴ See: <http://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementHungary11.04.2017.pdf>

¹⁸⁵ See: <https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/2017/04/11/cse-on-civic-space-and-fundamental-rights-restrictions-in-hungary/>

¹⁸⁶ See: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/hungary-parliament-considers-enacting-%E2%80%98anti-foreign-funded-organisations%E2%80%99>

¹⁸⁷ See: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/supporting-ngos-hungary-20170426.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ See: http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Joint_letter_to_EP_on_situation_in_Hungary.pdf

¹⁸⁹ The adopted text of the law is available here in English: <http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/LexNGO-adopted-text-unofficial-ENG-14June2017.pdf>.

	compliance. The NGO Law entered into force on 27 June 2017.
14 June 2017 Minister on Foreign Affairs on the Lex NGO	At a press conference held on 14 June 2017, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó said that it is “a legitimate demand on the part of the Hungarian people to know who finances civil organisations from abroad, and if they have nothing to be ashamed of then it is difficult to understand exactly why they are unwilling to reveal the identity of their foreign financiers”, adding that civil society organisations have “never been elected to do anything”, and accordingly the image that they are representing society in face of the Government is a false one. ¹⁹⁰
16–20 June 2017 Venice Commission: the Lex NGO will cause a disproportionate and unnecessary interference with freedoms	→ The Venice Commission adopted its opinion on the Lex NGO at its session held on 16–17 June 2017, with the opinion being published on 20 June 2017. The Venice Commission concluded that “while on paper certain provisions requiring transparency of foreign funding may appear to be in line with the standards, the context surrounding the adoption of the relevant law and specifically a virulent campaign by some state authorities against civil society organisations receiving foreign funding, portraying them as acting against the interests of society, may render such provisions problematic, raising a concern as to whether they breach the prohibition of discrimination”, and that the amendments made to the draft law before its adoption “do not suffice to alleviate the Venice Commission’s concerns” that the law “will cause a disproportionate and unnecessary interference with the freedoms of association and expression, the right to privacy, and the prohibition of discrimination”. ¹⁹¹ As a reaction, the Ministry of Justice issued a statement saying that the Ministry “expresses its incomprehension” that the Venice Commission, despite the [Parliament] accepting the majority of its recommendations, supplemented its final opinion with criticism based on political assumptions”. ¹⁹²
June–July 2017 NGOs declare that they will not register	→ After the adoption of the Lex NGO, several affected NGOs, including Amnesty International Hungary, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU), the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC), K-Monitor, and the Ökotárs Foundation, among others, declared that they will not register as an “organisation receiving foreign funds”. ¹⁹³ → On July 2017, the HCLU, the HHC and Civil Liberties Union for Europe issued a joint statement, calling upon the European Commission to activate its framework on the rule of law with regard to Hungary, and the European Parliament to follow up on its resolution of 17 May 2017 on the situation in Hungary with a view to triggering Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union as expeditiously as possible. ¹⁹⁴ On 11 July 2017, the same organisations wrote a joint letter to EC Vice-President Frans Timmermans, urging the European Commission to act to protect NGOs and the rule of law in Hungary. ¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ See in English: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-and-trade/news/knowning-the-identity-of-foreign-financers-is-a-legitimate-demand>.

¹⁹¹ European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Opinion 889/2017 on the Draft Law on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Support from Abroad*, Strasbourg, 20 June 2017, CDL-AD(2017)015, [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2017\)015-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2017)015-e), §§ 65-68.

¹⁹² See in English: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-justice/news/declaration-of-the-ministry-of-justice>.

¹⁹³ See e.g.: <http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/ujabb-civil-szervezetek-jelentettek-be-nem-tesznek-eleget-a-civil-torveny-eloirasainak-105256>, <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/we-will-not-register/>, <http://index.hu/belfold/2017/06/27/ujabb-civil-szervezet-csatlakozott-a-polgari-engedtelenseghez/>.

¹⁹⁴ See in English e.g.: <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/joint-statement-on-the-hungarian-ngo-law/>.

¹⁹⁵ See in English e.g.: <https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/liberties-letter-to-timmermans/12489>.

<p><i>11 July 2017</i></p> <p>Government representative on NGOs cooperating with smugglers</p>	<p>On 11 July 2017, Parliamentary Secretary of State Károly Konrád submitted in a statement to the press that Hungary was among the first to draw the attention of the Hungarian and European public to the fact that non-transparent, foreign funded organisations are playing a major role and have a serious responsibility with regard to the migration pressure being applied to Europe. “These organisations often encourage illegal immigrants to simply break the law, are supporting the illegal crossing of borders and are cooperating with people smugglers”, he said, criticising the fact that instead of easing the migration crisis their actions are in fact making the situation worse. “This also represents a risk to public safety and national security”, he added. He went on saying that “this is exactly why Parliament, with the clear support of the Hungarian people, had adopted the new Act on the Transparency of Foreign Funded Organisations, which is aimed at making the activities of foreign funded »pro-migrant organisations« transparent”.¹⁹⁶</p>
<p><i>13 July 2017</i></p> <p>EC launches infringement procedure due to the NGO Law</p>	<p>→ On 13 July 2017, the European Commission launched an infringement procedure for the law on foreign funded NGOs, sending a letter of formal notice to Hungary and giving the Hungarian authorities one month to respond. The European Commission concluded that the NGO Law does not comply with EU law for the following reasons: (i) it interferes unduly with fundamental rights as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular the right to freedom of association; (ii) it also introduces unjustified and disproportionate restrictions to the free movement of capital, as outlined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; and (iii) it also raises concerns as regards the respect of the right to protection of private life and of personal data.¹⁹⁷</p>
<p><i>August 2017</i></p> <p>23 NGOs turn to the Constitutional Court against Lex NGO</p>	<p>→ In August 2017, 23 NGOs submitted a joint constitutional complaint to the Constitutional Court, claiming that the Lex NGO violates Article VI (1) of the Fundamental Law of Hungary on the right to private life, Article VIII (2) on the right to assembly, Article IX (1)-(2) on the right to freedom of speech, and with regard to all the rights above, Article XV (1)-(2) on the prohibition of discrimination, and requested the Constitutional Court to abolish the NGO Law for its unconstitutionality. The organisations also published a sample constitutional complaint for other NGOs to use it.¹⁹⁸</p>
<p><i>September–October 2017</i></p> <p>National consultation about the “Soros plan” is launched, labelling two NGOs</p>	<p>Prime Minister Viktor Orbán addressed the Hungarian Parliament at the beginning of the opening day of the autumn session, on 18 September 2017. In his speech, the Prime Minister said that the Brussels bureaucrats are implementing the “Soros plan”, and “are feeding out of Soros’s hand”. He also announced that the parliamentary groups of the governing parties have asked the Government to launch a national consultation on the “Soros plan”.¹⁹⁹</p> <p>Questions of the national consultation concerning the “Soros plan” were published late September 2017, with Question 5 mentioning two NGOs, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Amnesty International in a negative context. The question was the following: “5. George Soros would also like to see migrants receive lighter sentences for the criminal</p>

¹⁹⁶ See in English: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-interior/news/hungary-supports-the-stricter-regulation-of-ngos-but-says-no-to-resettlement>.

¹⁹⁷ See: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1982_en.htm.

¹⁹⁸ See e.g.: <http://www.helsinki.hu/kozok-alkotmanyjogi-panaszt-adtuk-be-a-civilelles-torvennyel-szemben/>.

¹⁹⁹ See in English: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/hungary-will-never-be-an-immigrant-country>

For the full speech in English, see: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-address-in-parliament-before-the-start-of-daily-business20170918>.

	<p>offences they commit. / George Soros supports organisations that assist immigration and defend immigrants who have committed unlawful acts with significant amounts of funds. One example is the [Hungarian] Helsinki Committee, which argued with regard to the prohibited crossing of the border fence that »applying strict legal consequences with regard to unlawful entry may be considered troubling«. Another Soros-organisation, Amnesty International, demanded numerous times that Ahmed H, the man who was sentenced for attacking with stones Hungarian policemen defending the border, is set free. Amnesty would even have the Hungarian state pay compensation. Do you support this point of the Soros plan? Yes/No”²⁰⁰</p> <p>→ As a response, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) filed a civil lawsuit against the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister for damaging the organisations good reputation, asked for an apology, compensation, and the shredding of the questionnaires.²⁰¹</p> <p>István Hollik Christian Democrat MP said on 14 October 2017 that “it’s outrageous” that the HHC is “trying to cripple the consultation with legal tricks”, and claimed that the lawsuit is without any basis;²⁰² while Secretary of State Csaba Dömötör added that the lawsuit is only another reason for people to participate in the national consultation.²⁰³ The Secretary of State responsible for government communication, Bence Tuzson, submitted on 17 October 2017 that the lawsuit’s only aim is to interfere with the Hungarian people’s freedom of opinion, and it is another attack by the “Soros empire”, given the amount of money the HHC received from George Soros.²⁰⁴ The HHC was condemned by GONGOs Center for Fundamental Rights and Civil Unity Forum as well.²⁰⁵</p>
<p>4 October 2017</p> <p>Second step in the infringement procedure taken by the EC regarding the NGO Law</p>	<p>The formal letter of the European Commission of 13 July 2017 regarding the NGO Law was followed by a reasoned opinion, the second step in the infringement procedure, issued to Hungary on 4 October 2017. The European Commission “had decided to start legal proceedings against Hungary for failing to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty provisions on the free movement of capital, due to provisions in the NGO Law which indirectly discriminate and disproportionately restrict donations from abroad to civil society organisations. In addition to these concerns, the Commission is also of the opinion that Hungary violates the right to freedom of association and the right to protection of private life and personal data enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, read in conjunction with the EU Treaty provisions.”²⁰⁶</p>
<p>6 October 2017</p> <p>PM calls EC infringement procedure submission</p>	<p>On 6 October 2017, in a radio interview, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the following in relation to the infringement procedure against Hungary regarding the Lex NGO: “Well now, if you read the Brussels bureaucrats’ submission related to the Hungarian NGO law, all you can say is that across the whole of Europe it’s a complete laughing stock. An intelligent lawyer wouldn’t even bother dealing with it, because they’d get their fingers burnt. The</p>

²⁰⁰ English translation partly based on: <http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/national-consultation-on-the-soros-plan/>.

²⁰¹ See: <http://www.helsinki.hu/a-helsinki-bizottsag-beperelte-a-miniszterelnoki-kabinetirodat-a-nemzeti-konzultacio-miatt/>.

²⁰² See e.g.: <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/fidesz-nyugdijasok-nem-szamithatnak-az-ellenzerekre-2340430/>.

²⁰³ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnoki-kabinetiroda/parlamenti-allamtitkar/hirek/felhaborito-hogy-a-helsinki-bizottsag-megprobalja-megallitani-a-nemzeti-konzultaciort>.

²⁰⁴ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnoki-kabinetiroda/kormanyzati-kommunikacioert-felelos-allamtitkar/hirek/semmi-sem-akadalyozhatja-meg-a-magyarok-velemenynyilvanitasat>.

²⁰⁵ See e.g.: <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/alvitat-folytat-helsinki-bizottsag-2343301/>.

²⁰⁶ See: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3663_en.htm.

laughable	document smells so strongly of being produced in response to a political directive, and it contains arguments which are so inconsistent, that a lawyer couldn't even discuss it seriously, with a straight face. It's so ridiculous that one simply doesn't know what to do with it." ²⁰⁷
<i>October 2017</i> NGO cooperation agreements terminated	In October 2017, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, one of the NGOs specifically targeted by the Government and refusing to register as a foreign funded organisation, reported that within a few months, all of its long-standing cooperation agreements, concluded with authorities in order to systematically monitor and document the enforcement of human rights in immigration and police detention facilities and in penitentiary institutions, had been terminated by the Immigration and Asylum Office, the National Police Headquarters, and the National Penitentiary Headquarters, respectively, after decades of cooperation and more than 2,000 monitoring visits. ²⁰⁸
<i>24 October 2017</i> PM: NGOs aided migrants in crossing the border unlawfully	At a discussion organized by the Passauer Neue Presse on 24 October 2017, Prime Minister Orbán Viktor reiterated that a large international network is attached to George Soros, and while Hungary fought to protect the border, the organisations in question attacked the military, helped migrants entering the country illegally, and aided them in crossing the border unlawfully, which cannot be accepted. ²⁰⁹
<i>26 October 2017</i> Ministerial reports announced on Soros	At the weekly "Government Info" press conference, held on 26 October 2017, János Lázár, head of the Prime Minister's Office said that the Government wishes to clarify whether the manipulation attempts which the activities of George Soros's organisations in Brussels appear to suggest affected Hungary's sovereignty, and if so, how. He added that pursuant to the Government's decision, the Minister of Interior will be required to prepare a report on whether the manipulation attempts of the Soros-organisations carried out during the immigration crisis had any effect in Hungary. The head of the Prime Minister's Office also indicated that as minister supervising the intelligence services, he himself is preparing a report on what George Soros managed to achieve in Brussels against the Hungarian people. ²¹⁰
<i>27 October 2017</i> PM on national security services investigation into the "Soros network"	The next day, on 27 September, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his regular radio interview that, with the involvement of Hungary's national security services, the wider public must be informed about the "Soros network", which is attempting to influence life in Europe. Such revelations, he said, would enable Hungarian people to find out what is actually happening, who is seeking to influence their lives, and why and how they are doing it. He noted that it is also important to identify those Hungarians who, operating from Hungary, are prepared to cooperate with the network in this process. ²¹¹

²⁰⁷ The full text of the interview is available here in English: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-kossuth-radios-180-minutes-programme-14/>.

²⁰⁸ An English summary about the agreements, their termination and the consequence of their termination is available here: <http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/termination-of-agreements-summary.pdf>.

²⁰⁹ See e.g.: <https://444.hu/2017/10/24/orban-a-civil-szervezetek-megtamadtak-a-magyar-katonakat-es-rendorokat>.

²¹⁰ See: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/hirek/novemberben-jelentes-beremeles-lesz-az-egeszsegugyben>.

²¹¹ See in English: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/the-soros-network-has-an-extensive-sphere-of-influence-in-brussels> For the full text of the interview in English, see: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-kossuth-radios-180-minutes-programme-15/>.

*October 30 –
2 November 2017*
**NGOs refusing to
register envisaged
to be reported to
the prosecution**

It was reported on 30 October 2017 that the prosecutor's office had not launched a procedure yet against those NGOs who failed to register as "organisations receiving foreign funds". The Metropolitan Chief Prosecutor's Office submitted in this regard that they may not act ex officio regarding the issue, but could do so only upon a related request.²¹² A few days later, on 2 November 2017, the youth chapter of the Christian Democratic People's Party, the Youth Christian Democratic Alliance (IKSZ) announced that it will report NGOs refusing to register as foreign funded NGOs to the prosecutor's office.²¹³

BACKGROUND MATERIAL CONCERNING THE EEA/NORWAY GRANTS

A communication brief on the government attacks against Hungarian NGOs between 2013 and 2016 is available [here](#) in English.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS AND ANALYSES ON THE NGO LAW

Bill T/14967 on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds, submitted to the Parliament on 7 April 2017, is available [here](#) in English. The unofficial English translation of the adopted text of Act LXXVI of 2017 on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds is available [here](#).

What is the problem with the Hungarian law on foreign funded NGOs?

(Hungarian Helsinki Committee – Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, 9 October 2017)

<http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/What-is-the-Problem-with-the-Law-on-Foreign-Funded-NGOs.pdf>

Analyses of the Bill on foreign funded organisations (Lex NGO), April 2017

<http://www.helsinki.hu/en/analysis-of-the-bill-on-foreign-funded-organisations-lexngo/>

ANALYSIS ON THE SITUATION IN HUNGARY

An Illiberal State in the Heart of Europe

(Eötvös Károly Policy Institute – Mérték Media Monitor – Hungarian Civil Liberties Union – Hungarian Helsinki Committee – K-Monitor, October 2017)

http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/AnIlliberalState_online_final.pdf

²¹² See e.g.: <https://hirtv.hu/ahirtvhirei/beken-hagyjak-kulfoldrol-tamogatott-civil-szervezeteket-2424642>.

²¹³ See e.g.: <http://www.fidesz.hu/hirek/2017-11-02/az-iksz-a-fovarosi-fogyveszseghez-fordul-a-soros-altal-penzelt-civil-szervezetek-ugyeben/>.